New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1948

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"The Survivors"

New York Post

JANUARY 20, 1948

'The Survivors' Fails To Present Its Ideas

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

A good idea has gone astray in "The Survivors," which opened at the Playhouse last night, and a lot of fine theatrical talent is thereby wasted. It was apparently the intention of Irwin Shaw and Peter Viertel, the authors, to write one of the most arresting types of play, the melodrama of ideas. Taking as their background the post-Civil War period in Missouri, they planned to show the hatreds, bitterness, feuds and murderous passions aroused by four years of battle, and, by telling the story of two decent men driven to kill each other by the violent spirit of the time, to offer a parable in action for the people of another post-war day.

To present a drama that was filled with the promise of exciting events, colorful characters and provocative conceptions, an admirable cast, including such effective players as Louis Calhern, Hume Cronyn, Richard Basehart, Anthony Ross, E. G. Marshall and a vivid newcomer from the movies named Marc Lawrence, was wisely chosen. Furthermore, the direction was in the hands of Martin Gabel, who has taste, intelligence and imagination, while the settings represent the talented Boris Aronson"s best manner." As for the authors themselves, they are men of unquestioned talent and integrity.

Collaboration

Yet, such is the nature of the theatre that the result of such promising collaboration is far from happy. "The Survivors" is not a mess, because some of its individual scenes have vitality and excitement. But nothing seems to have gone right. In the sensible determination to keep their play from being either straight melodrama or straight preachment, but to make it a drama of action in which the ideas are presented by implication, the authors have succeeded only in weakening both aspects of their story-telling.

The chief misfortune is that the ideas get in the way of the action and the action interferes with the ideas. Then there is the manner in which the authors fail to fulfill their promises. The sinister character of the vagrant ex-Confederate mercenary, which Mr. Lawrence makes entertainingly ominous, never comes to anything. We are promised some sort of revelation about a mysterious good deed on the part of the central character's mortal enemy, and it is never made. The figure of an English war correspondent is introduced as if for some purpose, but the purpose is never revealed.

The Exposition

All of this gives "The Survivors" the air of a disorganized play, which is remarkable in the case of as knowing a dramatist as Irwin Shaw. For example, the first-act exposition is tossed at the audience with such hasty carelessness that it makes only for confusion. What happens in the end is that an intermittently entertaining Western melodrama is occasionally interrupted by editorial speeches on behalf of peace, chiefly delivered by Mr. Calhern, and the final point made seems neither tragic nor particularly significant.

It is a little difficult to say just how good the acting is, because characters and motivations are so confused and incomplete that it is not always easy to know what was intended. I know that the Messrs. Calhern, Basehart, Cronyn, Ross, Marshall and Lawrence give expert characterizations, but whether they are just right for the purposes of "The Survivors" I am unable to tell you It is a shame that the theatre insists on tripping up some of its worthiest writing skills.

'THE SURVIVORS.'

Play by Peter Viertel and Irwin Shaw; directed by Martin Gabel; settings and lighting by Boris Aronson; costumes by Rose Bogdanoff; presented by Bernard Hart and Martin Gabel at the Playhouse Theater Monday evening, January 19, 1948. The cast:

Butson Hedge	Marc Lawrence
Roy Clemens	Russell Collins
Alcott	Neil Fitzgerald
Finlay Decker	E. G. Marshall
Vincent Keyes	Louis Calhern
Tom Cameron	Anthony Ross
Steve Decker	Richard Basehart
Morgan Decker	Kevin McCarthy
Jane Decker	Jane Seymour
Lucy Dunne	Marianne Stewart
Jodine Decker	Hume Cronyn
Marcus Hedge	Edwin M. Bruce
Leonard Hawkes	Kenneth Tobey
Reverend Hoyt	Guy Arbury
Sheriff Bagley	Tom Hoier

Townspeople: Edith Rand, Ray Walston, Edgar Small, Eugene Steiner.

SYNOPSIS: Act I. The Court Hotel, Decker City, Missouri. An early summer afternoon in 1865. Act II. Veranda on the Decker ranch. That evening. Act III. Same as act I. That night.

Journal American

JANUARY 20, 1948

Good Acting Features A Too Articulate Play

By ROBERT GARLAND

Forgetful in my maturity, I hadn't remembered that the Hatfields and the McCoys were as articulate as they were last night at the Playhouse. In the days before they changed their names to Cameron and Decker, they shot first and talked about it later.

But not in the work on which Peter Viertel and Irwin Shaw collaborated as playwrights and Bernard Hart and Martin Gabel collaborated as producers. In "The Survivors," the Hatfields and the McCoys have picked up the gift of gab. And a message!

Where they got the gift of gab, I wouldn't know. But I do know that they got the message from The Sermon on the Mount. Only, in the gospel, according to St. Matthew, it's in fewer and finer words than those allotted to one Vincent Keyes on 48th st.

The nobility of the meek, the merciful, the poor-in-spirit and the peacemakers has long been propounded. But if, in his suicidal belligerence, mankind hasn't accepted it by now, I doubt that, between them, Mr. Viertel and Mr. Shaw can make it acceptable.

* * *

Verbal Feudin'

Not in "The Survivors." The collaborators, one a working scenarist, one a working critic, have concocted no more than a sere-and-mellow drama in which the Camerons (formerly Hatfields) and the Deckers (formerly McCoys) do a powerful lot of verbal feudin' and fightin'.

While a-feudin' and a-fightin', the Camerons and the Deckers go down deeper, stay down longer and come up drier conversationally than the Hatfields and the McCoys ever heard tell of. In 1865, and Missouri, they sure do talk a mean mutual extinction.

Mixed in the argument are a couple of lady feuders, although it's difficult to recall just when, where and why. Jane, I think, is The Mother and one of the Decker-McCoys. And Lucy, I wouldn't be surprised, is The Girl and one of the Cameron-Hatfields.

And that's all there is to the story. Except that, in Act I, they talk about a duel-to-be between Steve Decker and Tom Cameron; that, in Act II, they talk about it some more; that, in Act III, they're still talking about it when—bang! bang!—it's over.

* * *

Acting Admirable

Under the direction of co-producer Martin Gabel, the acting is, for the most part, admirable. Especially that of Kevin McCarthy who, as a Decker-McCoy, dies early. Anthony Ross is his actorial equal as one of the longer-lived Cameron-Hatfields.

And, back on the East Coast after a spell of picture-making on the West, Louis Calhern, Hume Cronyn and Richard Basehart acquit themselves effectively as stars. Mr. Calhern, in his re-preaching of The Sermon on the Mount, is impressively sincere.

As for that, the entire cast at the Playhouse is as sincere, if not always as impressive, as Mr. Calhern. And the War Between the States costumes by Rose Bogdanoff and the concurrent backgrounds by Boris Aronson are becomingly pictorial...

But, in "The Survivors," neither Peter Viertel, who's from Hollywood, nor Irwin Shaw, who's from New York, disproves the rule that no professional scenarist or drama critic can write a successful play. It's another Mr. Shaw who's the exception.

PM EXCLUSIVE

JANUARY 21, 1948

Kronenberger

A Play and a Plea That Fail to Meet

The Survivors has the beginnings of an interesting play and the concerns of an important one. Mr. Viertel and Mr. Shaw have written a melodrama of post-Civil War days, when nerves and emotions were jangled and violent and a small-town feud seemed just aching for gunfire. But Mr. Viertel and Mr. Shaw have very plainly intended their melodrama for a moral drama; their period yarn for a permanent parable; their small-town characters for fixed social attitudes; their two men who kill each other off for the reciprocal destructiveness of war.

* * *

Unfortunately, they are effective only at the start, during a first act that establishes a lively basis for drama; that keeps you interested and leaves you expectant. But a first act of this kind is hardly more than a promissory note; and the misfortune of *The Survivors* is that it never thereafter pays off. For one thing, it never thereafter really progresses. We are shown at the start Steve Decker returning to his home, determined to know whether he really has cause for calling out Tom Cameron; and we are shown the relatives and friends who will shape his decision. These relatives and friends represent, as unmistakably as in any morality play, the Voice of Violence, the Voice of Conventional Honor, the Voice of Reason, and so on. And for two more acts these contending advisers—these conflicting attitudes—pull Steve now one way, now another, in a kind of strict rotation that becomes a kind of static repetition. Worse yet from the point of view of story-telling and suspense, these people—as the Voice of This or That—are constantly oratorical, constantly indulging in set speeches.

* * *

And the speeches, which decidedly hurt *The Survivors* as melodrama, scarcely help it as moral drama. They are some of them effective and even eloquent speeches, but they all of them seem superimposed. For the story of *The Survivors*—or at any rate as its authors have told it—seems very unequal to the theme. Story and theme never really come together: never really coalesce, that is; for they sometimes plainly collide. Using, at intervals, a pointer-and-blackboard technique, the authors have made all they want to say admirably clear, but at the cost of making it unreal and unmoving. We are told too much and shown too little; we are appealed to rather than aroused. This is seldom good art, and I wonder whether it is good anti-war propaganda, either—particularly in the theater. The most moving arguments against war are not those that arraign it (even in the trappings of a small-town feud), but those that without comment just show what it does: whether in terms of horror, as with Goya; or in terms of heartbreak, as with Homer. And intellectually Vauvenargues has put into six words more than *The Survivors* has managed to say in three acts: "Vice stirs up war; virtue fights."

* * *

The production is a generally sound one. Martin Gabel has staged the play well, and there is some good acting. Much the finest performance, it seems to me, is given by Louis Calhern as the proponent of Reason; but Richard Basehart makes a good Steve, and there are helpful performances by E. G. Marshall, Anthony Ross, Marc Lawrence, Jane Seymour and Kevin McCarthy. Hume Cronyn seems to me miscast as Steve's grandfather; but may have been done in, for the role is a very ill-drawn one.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 20, 1948

'The Survivors' a Talky Western With a Message Favoring Peace

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"The Survivors," by Peter Viertel and Irwin Shaw, seems to be something new in the play business; it might be called a psychological Western. It also is a Western with a message which states that no argument was ever settled by gunpowder and that killing is not the road to peace.

Bernard Hart and Martin Gabel, with Gabel directing, gave "The Survivors" a colorful and often flavorsome production last evening at the Playhouse. Since the motive of the drama is high-minded, and some of its acting is interesting, and some of its writing has fire and punch, I wish I could turn in a completely happy report this morning.

But I can't, quite. Right at the rise of the curtain I began expecting a gunfight, because the setting is a Missouri saloon in 1865 and there is a whale of a fued on between two families. And they talk about this gunfight, too, with the representatives of the warring clans making a date to shoot it out tomorrow.

Calhern Excels.

As the evening wore on I kept hoping for this battle, being an unregenerate luster for blood, but by and by I got to thinking it never would happen because, before anybody ever reached for a Colt's, one or the other of the contenders would talk either himself or his opponent to death. Finally the duel does occur. Both men are killed, thereby settling nothing at all—which is the play's point.

Best of the performances is that of Louis Calhern, who, as a frontier lawyer, argues that the emnity between the Decker clan and a hard-bitten rancher named Cameron be settled by talking it out, rather than shooting it out. Calhern is the author's spokesman, and he does the job with unction while remaining a believable frontier type.

Richard Basehart plays a young Union soldier who has come from four years in a Confederate prison with a plan to kill Tom Comeron. He has a great many reasons, which are fully detailed. He is torn between the law of the gun and the law of peaceful agreement. He has a difficult job of wavering all through the play and he does it creditably.

There is, of course, a girl, nicely played by the attractive Marianne Stewart. There are character performances by Hume Cronyn, Marc Lawrence, Russell Collins and Tom Hoier. Jane Seymour is excellent in one sharply written scene in which a pioneer mother announces she has had her fill of menfolk and their killing ways. There are other okay principal performances by E. G. Marshall as a schemer, Anthony Ross as the feuding Cameron and Kevin McCarthy as another ex-soldier—another survivor of war who still wants to kill.

The settings, the saloon and a ranch veranda, are by Boris Aronson.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

JANUARY 20, 1948

= By HOWARD BARNES =

A-Fightin' an' A-Feudin'

PETER VIERTEL and Irwin Shaw have been violently thoughful in composing "The Survivors," at the Playhouse. They have taken feuding in Missouri directly after the Civil War as their chief theme. They have found more than a little sociological import in the subject. There is a lot of gun-fire in this Bernard Hart-Martin Gabel production, but there are also such commentaries on a post-war period as the declaration of one character that every one's nerves are "jangling like church bells in a cyclone." Under Gabel's taut direction, the show frequently realizes its depressing blend of melodrama and the vision of a brave new world, but the net effect is definitely depressing.

• • •

A staunch company has been enlisted for this new stage enterprise. Richard Basehart once more demonstrates that he is quite an actor in the role of a Yankee who spent the war in a prison camp. Louis Calhern has some resounding speeches as a lawyer and foster-father, who tries to keep the youngsters from engaging in a duel. Hume Cronyn, Russell Collins, E. G. Marshall, Marc Lawrence and Jane Seymour add bits of vivid portraiture to the large tapestry of the work. Unfortunately, the authors have left them high and dry when the dramatic chips are down. The resolution of "The Survivors" is about as unsatisfactory as any climax that has been witnessed hereabouts for some time.

• • •

Obviously the authors have tried to ring a bell for the present day in their consideration of another era when the survivors of battle and prison cared more for killing than peace. For the most part the gong rings with a hollow sound. The women of the play make most sense in a clutter of stilted dialogue. When a right-thinking lawyer, who fought the Mexicans as well as the rebels, gives a florid paraphrase of a speech Lincoln might have made, the doings at the Playhouse are boring as well as downright silly. David O. Selznick might be able to make a picture out of "The Survivors." If he does, this department is willing to bet that it will turn out to be a typical Western.

• • •

Gabel has done a smooth job with most of the staging, keeping a large company moving around as though it were up to something of significance and making much of the Boris Aronson settings of a small Missouri town in the summer of 1865. Meanwhile the Rose Bogdanoff costumes set off the period without being in any way authentic. Any plea for peace should be very welcome at the moment. Viertel and Shaw have couched theirs in a novel form, by remembering the time when no man dared walk down the street without shooting irons. Unfortunately, they have used too many dramatic duds in their play.

Daily Mirror

JANUARY 20, 1948

'The Survivors' Falls Short

By ROBERT COLEMAN

In "The Survivors" Peter Viertel and Irwin Shaw offer the lesson that men who live by violence and killing inevitably destroy themselves. It is a good lesson that merits better presentation than they've given it.

Viertel and Shaw have set their play in rural Missouri shortly after the end of the war between the States. The action centers about a saloon and ranch house owned by the Deckers, for whom the community was named.

Steve and Morgan Decker return from a Southern camp for war prisoners. They are embittered with neighbor Tom Cameron. They think he plotted to get them captured. Shortly after his arrival home, Morgan dies of injuries sustained during his incarceration.

Steve's grandfather, who prefers feuding to law courts, urges him to kill Cameron. But lawyer Vincent Keyes, an opponent of civilization, urges him to settle his differences with Cameron peaceably. Steve agrees, but circumstances beyond his control throw him into a gun fight. Both he and Cameron are killed, victims of lawlessness.

For a play that boasts one of the finest casts of the season, a lot of belligerent characters and plenty of guns, "The Survivors" is amazingly static, stilted. It blows off most of its steam in talk and only a little of the talk is calculated to grip the interest.

Here's a cast for you: Louis Calhern, Richard Basehart, Jane Seymour, E. G. Marshall, Marc Lawrence, Russell Collins, Neil Fitzgerald, Anthony Ross, Kevin McCarthy, Marianne Stewart, Hume Cronyn, Kenneth Tobey, Guy Arbury and Tom Hoier.

There are enough capable players to head the casts of three ordinary shows. Of them all Calhern draws the best material. As attorney Keyes, he prophesies a funeral oration he will deliver over Steve Decker. It is an eloquent plea for law and order, a lament for those who choose to live and die by the gun. Calhern reads the speech with conviction and fine effect.

Producers Bernard Hart and Martin Gabel certainly have given "The Survivors" the best available acting company, but Viertel and Shaw haven't provided it with a script worthy of their talents.

The thesis of "The Survivors" was expounded with more imagination and success in a novel, "The Fighting Coward," which became the basis of three films. It is a thesis that can well stand restating in these parlous times, but Viertel and Shaw haven't done it justice.

The newest tenant of the Playhouse, in sum, has admirable intentions, but doesn't quite manage to fulfill them.

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 20, 1948

'Survivors' Too Busy Talking to Move

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

There are a good many reasonable arguments in "The Survivors" against effectiveness of violence. They are expounded with so little drama that the result is more like having an uneven essay read to you than seeing a play.

The talky, nearly actionless progress of this work has a fatal effect. There has been developed so little individuality in the characters who die, that when they do, their loss conveys not the slightest emotional impact.

The play is set in the period right after the Civil War in Missouri. Steve and Morgan Decker return from four years in a Confederate jail. They are intent on vengeance on Tom Cameron, their commanding officer in the Union Army. They believe that after a court-martial he deliberately left them to the enemy when he retired his men.

Bad Blood Between Them.

Blood has never been good between Cameron, a rough, self-made rancher, and the Deckers, whose grandfather has had the town named after him.

Morgan soon dies of injuries inflicted by his jailers. The rest of the play is a series of long arguments as to whether, and if so, how, when and where, Steve should shoot Cameron.

An older lawyer named Keyes almost convinces him that the shooting is wrong. A girl he loves makes him listen to the true story of Cameron's retreat, and pays by Steve's learning how she comforted other returnees before he got home.

His grandfather encourages the shooting, but under fair circumstances. A nasty third brother urges him to ambush Cameron.

Meet at Long Last.

These different points of view and several more take a great deal of conversation to establish. At long last the two men meet, and incited by an extraneous in-

terference, kill each other.

The dialogue has no flavor distinguishing the personal vernacular of any one character from that of another. The people have points of view, but no temperamental color.

The play is too busy talking to move. Once Morgan has staggered upstairs to die, there is no action. Only an occasional pistol shot disturbs the talk. The argument leaves you feeling you have listened to children harassing each other on a "You will," "I won't" basis.

Louis Calhern as the lawyer has the conviction to make his speeches so sincere that they stand out from the rest of the text as if a different author had penned them. And Jane Seymour as the mother has one scene where with quiet power she brings alive the whole discouraging story of her life.

Monotonous Part.

Anthony Ross is believable as Cameron, though it is a monotonous part of bits, all in the same sorehead mood.

Kevin McCarthy is the bitter, dying Morgan, and Marianne Stewart is subdued, but urgent as the girl.

There are several other good actors in the company, none at his best. It is not a performance that will add to the distinction of anyone concerned.

The New York Times

JANUARY 20, 1948

AT THE THEATRE

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Being dramatists first and reformers second, Peter Viertel and Irwin Shaw have written a rattling good play with a meaning. It is "The Survivors," which was played with gusto at the Playhouse last evening. The authors are demonstrating the futility of killing. But instead of presenting it as a political argument, they have embodied it in a rousing gun drama laid in Missouri after the Civil War.

In Decker City, which is cattle country, there is a feud of long standing between the Deckers and the Camerons. When the play opens, two of the Decker boys are coming home from the Civil War. They have been cooped up for four years in a Confederate prison, and they blame their imprisonment on the treachery of Tom Cameron. Nearly everyone in town expects them to shoot it out with Tom Cameron as soon as they can draw a bead on him.

* * *

But not everybody does. Vincent Keyes, the local lawyer, is fed up on killing, which he regards as no solution to anything. And Steve Decker, who has had a bellyful of war, is no instinctive killer, either. Before he starts shooting at Cameron, he proposes to investigate the truth of his case against Cameron.

This is where "The Survivors" begins to get down to the core of its thesis. For Steve, hesitating between principle and tradition, has to listen to the bitter arguments from both sides—the venomous vanity of the old generation that fought its way up on killing; his brother's implacable hatred for Cameron and his contempt for reason and scruples; his mother's disgust for her family of killers; the lawyer's vision of a future that will rise above killing.

* * *

In essence those are intellectual arguments against war. But Mr. Viertel and Mr. Shaw are not wasting their breath on abstract discussion. They have written an old-fashioned frontier melodrama, with whisky, guns, a sheriff, some love scenes, a funeral and most of the familiar trappings. As a melodrama, it is exciting. As an analysis of killing, it contains a number of bitter and eloquent speeches that tell the truth about carnage with blistering conviction. If memory serves, we all thought highly of Mr. Shaw's "Bury the Dead" as comment on the first World War. But "The Survivors" is a much more idiomatic play, written in terms of the journeyman theatre. As an indictment of killing it is realistic, angry and searching, and the maturest statement the contemporary stage has made on the most urgent problem in the world today.

"The Survivors" is played with great relish by a first-rate company that enjoys it and passes on its enjoyment to the audience. Although Martin Gabel's direction may not have poured all the ideas into a fluid performance, it is audacious, tense and flamboyant with a hard surface. There is not a slovenly performance in the cast. But some of the acting is not only pungent but stimulating and enlightened. As the lawyer, Louis Calhern has one beautiful speech in the last act, and he speaks it magnificently. Jane Seymour as the mother reads her big speech in the second act with a sharpness and fire calculated to make a playgoer's hair curl.

* * *

Hume Cronyn's pottering, prattling old man with bloody memories is a superb characterization. Anthony Ross' bitter, ignorant Cameron; Richard Basehart's confused, inquiring Steve; Russell Collins' irritable barkeep; E. G. Marshall's vengeful brother; Kevin McCarthy's sickly but hot-tempered, returned war veteran; Marianne Stewart's honest-minded and handsome woman of the frontier—these are lively acted portraits done in a racy style.

For settings Boris Aronson has designed some beautifully lighted frontier shacks of warped wood dried by the sun and beaten by the weather—all in the dour, desperate mood of the drama. No doubt the performance as a whole will gather momentum with repetition. Last evening it seemed a little ingrown and sticky. But Mr. Viertel and Mr. Shaw have written a shrewd, tingling gun-show with a big idea. It deserves the wide hearing it is bound to have.

The Sun

JANUARY 20, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

A Jumbled, Post-war Play, 1865.

"The Survivors," which had its premiere last evening at the Playhouse, is a curiously jumbled play, a melodramatic story combined with a philosophical tract about the uselessness of killing. The authors, Peter Viertel and Irwin Shaw, show great concern about the insecurity of a world dominated by armed force and in which the killer instinct remains unchecked, but they haven't put their observations into a cohesive theater piece.

It's my notion that "The Survivors" would have been considerably more effective if Viertel & Shaw had stuck to straightforward melodrama. Their play is now an unsatisfactory mixture of social comment with feuding, violence and vengeance that used to belong to the mountain country of John Fox Jr.

"The Survivors" presents an account of war's aftermath. Its authors write of the bitterness and hatreds, the fury and the passion, the uncertainty and the distrust, that followed the civil war as they tell of the return, in the early summer of 1865, of two Union soldiers, the Decker brothers, to a town in Missouri.

The Deckers spent four years in a foul prison. They come back home with vengeance in their hearts for the fellow townsman they blame for locking them up and leaving them in their cells to be captured by the Confederate forces. One brother, the more fanatical Morgan Decker, his body racked by disease, dies soon after his return. And it's up to the more decent Steve Decker to put their long-planned revenge into effect.

But after the first act the authors turn from melodramatic story-telling to talk—a great deal of talk—of the futility of killing and of the plight of a bloodthirsty mankind that goes in for useless slaughter. And their play slips away from them pretty steadily.

Louis Calhern, who has developed into one of the best character actors of our time, now plays the peace-seeking country lawyer who serves as a spokesman for the playwrights, and he's good at it, but his role is actually a secondary one. Richard Basehart puts a great deal of tension into his performance as the Decker boy torn between instinctive decency and fairmindedness and a desire for revenge.

Hume Cronyn gets something of a characterization into the part of a feuding old fellow who could have stepped right out of "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine." Anthony Ross is excellent as the fiery antagonist of the Deckers. Russell Collins, always an effective actor, makes a person of a weak and whimpering village bartender, Neil Fitzgerald turns in a good performance in a sketchily written role of an ex-soldier still willing to kill for a price, and you watch E. G. Marshall, who outdoes all the Deckers in sheer orneriness. Marianne Stewart and Jane Seymour make pleas for the women of the world in behalf of peace.

Martin Gabel has given "The Survivors" keen professional direction and the players do all they can, but the new piece at the Playhouse is an uncertain and haphazard play.

"H. M. S. Pinafore"--"Cox and Box"

The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London is playing a limited repertory engagement. Except for their initial presentation space permits us to reproduce only four newspaper reviews of each presentation.

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 20, 1948

'Pinafore' Has Its Turn at The Century

By DOUGLAS WATT

A mettlesome performance of that delightful taffy-pull, "H. M. S. Pinafore," preceded by an amiable presentation of "Cox and Box," a brief and acceptable conceit, last night continued the enchantment at the Century, where the d'Oyly Carte troupe is winning new Gilbert and Sullivan audiences.

The eloquent company, enhanced by the fascinating activity of Martyn Green and Darrell Fancourt in particular, made it seem highly foolish of the rest of the world not to have become uniformly British long ago and settled down to a comfortable, middle-class, English speaking life.

Green's elegant first lord of the admiralty and Fancourt's unregenerate Dick Deadeye are imperishable comic creations and surely there has never been a more manly or better-voiced English seaman than Thomas Round's Ralph Rackstraw. Nor, for that matter, could Ella Halman's bumboat lady, Little Buttercup, or Charles Dorning's dignified captain scarcely be improved upon.

It is one of the inexplicable things about both Gilbert and Sullivan and their most accomplished interpreters that they dissolve almost any attempt at criticism and dispel all unkind thoughts. Minor flaws or excesses in the general excellence of the evening mattered little beside the wonderful fact that the quarter-deck of the "Pinafore" was once more alive with some of the most charming and melodious people who never existed.

'H. M. S. PINAFORE.'

Opera written by W. S. Gilbert; composed by Arthur Sullivan; scenery by Joseph and Phil Harker; costumes by George Sheringham; orchestra under the direction of Isidore Godfrey; presented by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London at the Century Theater Monday evening, January 19, 1948. The cast:

The Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Porter, K. C. B. — Martyn Green
Captain Corcoran — Charles Dorning
Ralph Rackstraw — Thomas Round
Dick Deadeye — Darrell Fancourt
Bill Bobstay — Richard Walker
Bob Becket — L. Radley Flynn
Josephine — Helen Roberts
Hebe — Joan Gillingham
Little Buttercup — Ella Halman

'COX AND BOX.'

Opera written by Maddison Morton and F. C. Burnand; composed by Arthur Sullivan; presented by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London at the Century Theater. The cast:

Cox — Richard Dunn
Box — Leonard Osborn
Bouncer — Richard Walker

The New York Times

JANUARY 20, 1948

'Pinafore' Launched

Sooner or later that D'Oyly Carte crew was bound to put to sea in the saucy craft known as "H.M.S. Pinafore" and for loyal Savoyards it was only a matter of waiting. Last night the launching took place at the Century Theatre and, as might have been expected, it was a gay launching, indeed. From the looks of things, and the sound of them, there should be nothing but calm water and clear skies for the rest of the week up on Fifty-ninth Street.

"Pinafore" has been a great favorite ever since it first helped establish the team of Gilbert and Sullivan and the way the D'Oyly Carte seamen put it on it is easy to see that it always will be. For it makes no difference how many times they go through its merry course, they do it with the vigor of lusty followers of the brine. There never is any doubt that they fully appreciate Gilbert's fun-poking at British patriotism, at the distinction between the stations of the lowly and the lordly and at the state of things which could elevate a land-bound fellow to the rank of First Lord of the Admiralty.

Martyn Green, of course, is playing the role of the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Porter, and he's up to his usual tricks. It's amazing what Mr. Green can do with these parts and with sufficient encouragement from his enthusiastic audience he can invent a stage full of business to put everyone in a light-hearted state of mind.

Ralph Rackstraw, that unhappy tar who dares to love above his station, is being played by Thomas Round, who gives the character the mock romanticism it needs. His lady love is Helen Roberts, an old friend on these shores. Darrell Fancourt is the unreconstructed rascal, Dick Deadeye, and he is a villain right out of those dime novels so dear to an older generation. Ella Halman is playing Little Buttercup and Charles Dorning is properly haughty as Captain Corcoran, a leader who can never err—well, hardly ever.

For the curtain-raiser — why "Pinafore" needs one always has seemed a bit on the questionable side—there is the usual "Cox and Box," an item by Maddison Morton and F. C. Burnand for which Sullivan supplied the music. Its participants are Richard Dunn, Leonard Osborn and Richard Walker, who put it over in the burlesque style intended. "Cox and Box" hardly is distinguished for either its music or its jest, but then, why quibble when there's "H. M. S. Pinafore" unfurling her sails in the wings.—L. F.

The Sun

JANUARY 20, 1948

'H. M. S. PINAFORE'

Manned by a skillful and jolly crew from the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, "H. M. S. Pinafore," the good ship and true built so many years ago by Gilbert and Sullivan, dropped anchor for a week's call last night at the Century Theater. The first evening of her stay in port can be logged today in glowing phrases.

This reviewer never saw the famous duo's tuneful spoofing of the British Navy presented more delightfully. The production is spic and span with fresh and colorful costumes designed by George Sheringham for the sisters and the cousins and the aunts, and for fair Josephine too. Joseph and Phil Harker have made everything shipshape on the Pinafore's deck as she floats serenely on bright blue waters in their attractive setting. And what counts most—the whole company, both principals and chorus was in fine fettle and fine voice last night. Sullivan's score for this opera contains many of his most familiar tunes, and it was good to hear the old favorites sung so well.

Martyn Green is serving once more as the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Porter, K. C. B., First Lord of the Admiralty, and he is quite wonderful, keeping that conceited worthy's mock pomp most amusingly in rein in the early stages, and then coming up with some hilarious didoes in the closing moments. Helen Roberts again brings her lovely voice to the role of Josephine, and Thomas Round, who is new here in the part, both sings and acts well as the lovelorn able seaman Ralph Rackstraw. Ella Halman is Little Buttercup and a good one. The portrayal of Dick Deadeye is to be divided this week between Darrell Francourt and L. Radley Flynn. Fancourt sang the role last evening and in his hands Deadeye was just the ornery fellow he should be. Charles Dorning is a sufficiently harried skipper.

"Cox and Box," for which Sullivan wrote the music and Maddison Morton and F. C. Burnand the book and lyrics, is presented as a curtain raiser on this the D'Oyly Carte Company's fourth bill of their current visit. Richard Dunn, Leonard Osborn and Richard Walker team up to make it an amusing caper. It is "Pinafore," however, that makes the evening the joyous treat it is.

HERRICK BROWN.

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 20, 1948

G & S Double Bill Delights English Operetta Votaries

By ROBERT BAGAR.

The spirit and the letter of Gilbert and Sullivan are still in evidence at the New Century, where "Cox and Box" and "H. M. S. Pinafore" last evening delighted a throng of votaries. It may not be news to all, perhaps, that the former is not actually a G & S work, since Gilbert had nothing to do with it, the Sullivan collaborators this time being Maddison Morton and F. C. Burnand. Nor may it be news that the piece, nevertheless, is done by the D'Oyly Carters as if it were another by the twin geniuses of English operetta.

For, so long as there is a Sullivan touch to the music, a Savoyard sheen to the staging and a blithe and zany interpretation of the roles in the old tradition, "Cox and Box," to all intents and purposes, just belongs.

It was nicely presented, and its one ludicrous situation—no more than a mere excuse for some neat, though not gaudily ironic, lines and some pretty music—is satisfactory on all counts.

Not Overdone.

Especially was it so by virtue of its not being overdone. The Journeyman Hatter, the Journeyman Printer and Bouncer took time to get into their parts. When they did, the smile of good fun was on everything.

A music critic who covers Gilbert and Sullivan shows may, understandably, be pardoned his concern with the musical performance. And last evening's "H. M. S. Pinafore," for instance, boasted an excellent one. In solos, or duets, or grand ensembles, it was always the same story—perfect co-ordination in the musical respects. The Italians have a word for that sort of performance. It is, they say, "quadrato," which may be freely translated as "all square."

A Sympathetic Lass.

Martyn Green's brilliant acting in his role of First Lord of the Admiralty almost put everything else into the discard. That it did not was owing to his complete regard for the show as a whole. Like the true and devoted performer, he knew where to put on the brake, and the pressure he applied, it seemed to me, was at times quite firm.

Helen Roberts was a sympathetic "lass that loved a sailor." Ella Halman a quite likely Portsmouth Bumboat Woman in the G & S manner. Charles Dorning, as Captain Corcoran, and Thomas Round, as Ralph Rackstraw, the hero, were persuasive comedy figures. Darrel Fancourt's Dick Deadeye looked villainous, and he did, all told, a capital job.

So another of Gilbert's amusing tirades was leveled at pomposity, protocol and popular grand operas—to the smooth tunes of Sullivan, which were beautifully played by the orchestra.

"The Men We Marry"

The New York Times

JANUARY 17, 1948

Study in Love

By BROOKS ATKINSON

If there had never been a play before in the history of the world, "The Men We Marry," acted at the Mansfield last evening, would be remarkable. It has characters, dialogue, a plot and three acts, which would be sensational inventions if they were new. But they are not new, and have appeared on other stages as recently as the past week. The only remarkable thing about "The Men We Marry" is that anyone should have thought that it is good enough to put on the stage.

Probably "The Men We Marry" seems more intolerable than most plays because it pretends to be sophisticated. Elisabeth Cobb and Herschel Williams are writing about people "in a fashionable section of Maryland." The women are constantly slipping into one Helene Pons creation after another, and the men dress for dinner in immaculate white coats, shaking cocktails with monotonous agility and quarreling with the women.

According to the plot, these dazzling sophisticates knock themselves out with their own cynicism and wickedness. Purged of sin, they move into a virtuous world in the last act, where they will become increasingly noble. But the ideas of "The Men We Marry" are as hackneyed as a worn-out serial story and the dialogue is incredible. Possibly the play was ghosted by one of its own characters in an exalted mood.

It has been expensively produced and torpidly directed. Donald Oenslager, who takes the thin with the thick, has designed an agreeable country house with glimpses of nature that look more inviting as the evening wears on. The cast is a good one, from Shirley Booth to Margaret Hamilton, not forgetting John Hudson, who is not among the featured players. But the direction is so inept and the parts so monotonous that there does not seem to be much point in discussing the actors. This department would like to compliment them for memorizing those lines and for being able to distinguish them from the lines in all the bad plays for centuries.

* * *

On the whole, the audience gave the more brilliant performance last evening. It came tumbling in in assorted segments throughout the opening act. After each intermission it very effectively returned late, held counsel in the aisles and picked the wrong seats. Sidney Phillips, counselor for M-G-M, was the luckiest man in the theatre last evening. Somebody stole his seat after the first act.

'THE MEN WE MARRY.'

Play by Elisabeth Cobb and Herschel Williams; directed by Martin Manulis; setting and lighting by Donald Oenslager; costumes by Helene Pons; presented by Edgar F. Luckenbach at the Mansfield Theater Friday evening, January 16, 1948. The cast:

Maggie Welch	Shirley Booth
Phillip	David Anderson
Warren Throckmorton	Robert Willey
Gwennie	Margaret Hamilton
Dr. Alan Lambert	Neil Hamilton
Jill Madison	Marta Linden
Mark Kennicott	John Williams
Leda Mallard	Doris Dalton
Ned Synder	Joseph Allen Jr.
Mary	Anne Sargent
Peter Sterling	John Hudson

SYNOPSIS: Entire action of the play takes place in the home of Maggie Welch, located in a fashionable section of Maryland. Time: The Present. Mid-Summer. Scenes: Act I. A Saturday morning. Act II. Scene 1. An hour later. The same day. Scene 2. That evening. Act III. Scene 1. Two A. M. The following morning. Scene 2. Eight A. M. Same day.

New York Post

JANUARY 17, 1948

'The Men We Marry'

— By Richard Watts Jr. —

The week in which the little insomnia cure called "The Men We Marry" comes to town is no time to be talking about immortality in the theatre. It is not easy to think of a play less likely to have a long life than the almost incredibly boring "comedy" by Elizabeth Cobb and Herschel Williams which opened at the Mansfield last night. If you have a memory for horrors, you may recall "The Magic Touch" and "Heads or Tails." Here is something in the same abysmal category.

Amid much weary small talk and an occasional tired striving for epigrams, "The Men We Marry" tells how three dull harpies attempt to arrange the marital affairs of a young war widow and not only almost wreck her romance but nearly lose their own men. There is only one achievement which I will grant the two playwrights. They have created several off-stage characters, who are only talked about, and have made them as dull as the characters who actually appear.

Several actors whose reputations have hitherto been unsullied appear in these punishing proceedings, and, since they must have suffered last night almost as much as the rest of us, the decent thing is to say no more about them. Two of the players, however, deserve to be mentioned with respect, because they miraculously managed to survive the disaster. A young actress named Anne Sargent brings a warm and touching honesty to the role of the war widow, while John Williams, always an intelligent actor succeeds in making one of the men of the story credible. They have earned their critical accolades the hard way.

Daily Mirror

JANUARY 17, 1948

'The Men We Marry' Boasts Fine Cast

By ROBERT COLEMAN

"The Men We Marry," which Edgar F. Luckenbach brought to the Mansfield Theatre last evening, boasts a cast of fine players who run around in circles for three acts looking for a play.

Authors Elisabeth Cobb and Herschel Williams started with an idea for a play, but smothered it to death beneath masses of boring, sleep-provoking dialogue. Their attempts to be sophisticated and clever merely resulted in ear-racking juveniility.

Cobb and Williams' script is something of a rewrite, without music, of "Park Avenue." It has to do with the efforts of three divorce and dough-minded witches to break up the romance of a couple of nice kids.

The scene is set in the manor house of a Maryland estate owned by the mother of the girl who falls in love with an impoverished young medical student. Mama has been a successful writer of fictional trash. Her cronies are a politician's alley-cat wife and a dame who does okay with the help of Reno.

The three are on the make for love and money. Their victims are a prosperous magazine editor, a plane manufacturer and a society doctor, right out of "Allegro." Well, that should give you some notion of what the fuss at the Mansfield is about. There was a contrived happy ending, though many of the first nighters were wooing Morpheus when it came and had to quiz their insomniac neighbors if they wanted the details.

There seems to be a belief in certain writing circles that money brings nothing but unhappiness and divorce. People who want and have it should be imbecilic, philandering evildoers.

Well, Henry Ford gave the world cheap, efficient autos because he wanted to make money. John D. Rockefeller gave the world the gas to run them because he liked the feel of greenbacks. And though Prof. Albert Einstein might not have worked out the theory of relativity purely for the sake of gain, we venture to guess that he is not exactly averse to the comfortable home and handsome salary which his labors earned for him. And all three of them enjoyed notably happy domestic lives.

Producer Luckenbach has hired enough first-rate mimes for three good plays. The cast includes such capables as Shirley Booth, John Williams, Neil Hamilton, Doris Dalton, Marta Linden, Joseph Allen, Jr., Anne Sargent, John Hudson and Margaret Hamilton. They, along with the critics who braved all three acts of "The Men We Marry," merit medals for courage under fire.

As the final curtain fell, there was an explosion off stage. The writer's young son then dashed on, exclaiming: "That's my atomic bomb." But it was really one of the worst plays of the season falling flat on its silly face.

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 17, 1948

New Producer Launches Himself With 'Men We Marry'—and Sinks

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"The Men We Marry," a comedy by Elisabeth (Mrs. Irvin S.) Cobb and Herschel Williams, was presented last evening at the Mansfield under auspices which may explain the whole thing, and which may best be described by making public a paragraph which appeared yesterday in the drama news column of the valuable N. Y. Times.

"'The Men We Marry,'" said this item, "... establishes Edgar F. Luckenbach as an independent producer. No longer, says the young scion of the steamship family, will he permit himself to dip into a vast exchequer by backing shows produced by others, a costly procedure thus far, or serve as second fiddle in the capacity of co-sponsor . . .

"Henceforth Mr. Luckenbach, who will reach his 23d birthday May 17, intends to be his own boss. With what luck he'll find out tomorrow."

Now It's Tomorrow.

Well, today is tomorrow and if he wants to find out from this paper here it is:

At the age of 22 years and five months, Mr. Luckenbach needs experience in judging scripts. He must learn that what may look like smart talk on paper can sound simply godawful when it is spoken on a stage—even when it is spoken by such nice players as Shirley Booth, Doris Dalton, Marta Linden and Neil Hamilton.

He must not be impressed any more by glitter; in time, if his vast exchequer holds out long enough, he may learn that lady novelists, society doctors and magazine editors are, in real life, about as interesting as a Landon campaign button, and that better playwrights than Mrs. Cobb and Mr. Williams can't make them look fascinating on a stage.

In the bloom of young manhood Mr. Luckenbach must believe that sex is wonderful, as who, indeed, does not? But in time he should learn that sex talk on a stage can be a duller pastime than curling up with the Congressional Record. Today, in his inexperience, he may believe that women who have had several divorces apiece must be very, very sophisticated; with the gentle passage of years—50 or so, let's say—he will realize that such females are likely to be first class dopes.

I wish Mr. Luckenbach a long life, and a happier one. Sailing boats.

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 17, 1948

'Men We Marry' Plods Along Its Dreary Way

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

The one great grace about "The Men We Marry" is the fact that the cast acts in an aura of knowing just about how dreary a little play it is.

Not that these actors throw the play away, for they try, but there is no fight in them. The average is about three laughs to an act, and if it is not a comedy it is hard to classify. The brightest humor is Margaret Hamilton's, playing one of those assertive maids at which she so excels. The rest of the crowd just hangs on.

Shirley Booth is the only pleasant character in the inner circle. Since she must pretend to be as useless and decadent as her friends for a large part of the play, there is not much restitution in her final unveiling of truth.

Breaks Up Match.

As a tottering author, she has asked to her country home two former school chums who have spent the intervening years acquiring and doffing husbands. The girls decide that the author's daughter has no right to marry a penniless medical student. In breaking up the young match they drive off their own boy friends.

Then the author describes herself as such an emotional wastrel that her daughter in disgust rushes after her beau, and mother for no particular reason also gets her man.

This is the sort of play where paying attention never seems important. If your mind wanders for a while it can come back and find no particular changes.

Inconsequential Lines.

It sometimes seems impossible for actors to memorize such inconsequential lines. On second thought you realize that it could not matter much whether they said the right words or not.

It is all as casual and unimpressive as the conversation on any average week end in the country and a good deal less witty than most.

Certain scenes require the movement of the characters through a living room and on and off a visible terrace in such a constant flow that the result looks like a fashion show. That nobody gets killed in the press is to the credit of the direction.

Donald Oenslager has provided a lush suburban setting.

No one wants to give them away unnecessarily, but the people involved in this, besides Miss Booth and Miss Hamilton, are Doris Dalton, Marta Linden, Neil Hamilton, John Williams, Anne Sargent, Joseph Allen Jr., John Hudson, Robert Willey and David Anderson.

Let it be said that on the average the gentlemen come off just a shade better than the ladies. Instead of being meddling nitwits, they stand about looking indignant.

Journal American

JANUARY 17, 1948

Boy Gets Girl —In Maryland

By ROBERT GARLAND

Under one title or another, "The Men We Marry" has been hanging around the threshold of production for quite some little while. Yesterday, after dark, Edgar Luckenbach pushed the piece across and, on the Mansfield Theatre stage, exposed it to the public gaze.

As producer, Mr. Luckenbach was kind to this Elizabeth Cobb-Herschel Williams play. Kinder than the play itself deserved. He gave it a would-be Maryland setting in Donald Oenslager's secondary manner and complementary costumes run up by Helene Pons.

He gave it also a first-rate, if not distinguished cast, in which, taking them as they came, were Shirley Booth, Margaret Hamilton, Neil Hamilton, Marta Linden, John Williams, Doris Dalton and a wee refugee from radio whose name is Philip Welsh.

Frankly, and not between ourselves, Producer Luckenbach could have saved himself the trouble. And a pretty penny, too!

* * *

False Setting

In "The Men We Marry," Miss Cobb and Mr. Williams have collected some of the most unpalatable characters with which the season has been afflicted. Having gotten them together, they've dumped them down in Maggie Welch's house in "fashionable Maryland."

So programs say! But, as one Marylander to no other, the house isn't Maryland, the landscape isn't Maryland, the local newspaper isn't Maryland and the accent of the native farm-hand is off the deep end of Tobacco Road. Maryland, my Maryland, indeed!

And Maggie Welch, whose family, friends and farm-hands quarrel, drink and bore each other and the audience all evening, is the familiar lady novelist from Connecticut not even pretending to be a Marylander. The Free State would deport her to New England.

Her and her un-Maryland machinations where her daughter and her daughter's boy friend are concerned.

* * *

Boy Gets Girl

Pushed about by the playwrights, Maggie is joined by her house guests in an unholy effort to tear Mary from Peter Sterling's stalwart arms. To make the plot last longer, she all but succeeds. Hence Act III, in a couple of endless, tasteless scenes.

At long last, Elizabeth Cobb, Herschel Williams and Maggie Welch give in. And Boy Peter gets Girl Mary, and he's welcome to her. He'd have been a lot more welcome to her just before the curtain rose on Act I. Then, there would have been no play!

The aforenamed first-rate players and a John Hudson who hasn't yet been mentioned do what they can with a shoddy piece of dramatic goods. They're all of no avail. And Martin Manulis' Jerry built direction merely leaves bad enough alone.

Bad as that is, "The Men We Marry" is made even worse by the pretentiousness of its production. The plays we see!

The Sun

JANUARY 17, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

It Couldn't Be Worse.

The drama had some rough going last night at the Mansfield. A fairly monstrous play called "The Men We Marry," incased in fancy scenery and populated by expensively overdressed players, went through the motions of having its Broadway premiere. Perhaps you will recall that "Topaze" closed recently after its first performance. If there were any justice the Mansfield's new piece would have given up after its first act.

If young Edgar F. Luckenbach likes playing theater, it's all very well. But I suggest that he throw his money around on something worth while, like "The Bees and the Flowers" or "Tenting Tonight." His current offering doesn't belong in a New York theater or a summer stock theater or a high school auditorium, or anywhere else. Weren't there any good friends in Boston who could have warned him?

Unblushingly, Elisabeth Cobb and Herschel Williams admit authorship of "The Men We Marry." The name of Martin Manulis appears on the playbill as the director. Donald Oenslager, who doesn't work for pennies, was hired to do the setting and Helene Pons designed the clothes. And some players who have been in reputable productions are associated with the enterprise. It's all very puzzling.

If you happen to be wondering, "The Men We Marry" is one of those week-end plays. Noel Coward and Lonsdale used to write them, but they did it better. This particular week end party is held in Maryland instead of on Long Island and the Cobb-Williams story, told to the accompaniment of dialogue that is studiously and painfully epigrammatic, is all about the frantic efforts made to disrupt the romance between a female fiction writer's daughter and a penniless but personable medical student. Everybody's idea is to get the girl married to a mature magazine editor, who doesn't want to be bothered. Summing up: Mary Welch keeps her beau and three conniving women meet defeat. So does everybody else at the Mansfield.

It will be merciful to say as little as possible about the performances of the women in the cast, but let it be reported that the ingenue, Anne Sargent, comes through with her standing as an actress undamaged. Of the male contingent, the facile John Williams fares best and conducts himself as if he were actually appearing in a play.

Put down "The Men We Marry" as one of the season's worst—any season's worst. The amiable Michael Myerberg will be looking for an attraction for his house by the time these lines appear in print.

"The Men We Marry"—*continued*

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

JANUARY 17, 1948

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Yakety-Yak

TOP honors for yakety-yak in the theater must certainly go to "The Men We Marry," at the Mansfield. Elisabeth Cobb and Herschel Williams, who thought up this dreadful dramatic trifle, must have thought that the stage paid off by the word. They have blown up their conversation piece to the size of a blimp, as dull people chat about divorce, adultery, planned marriages and the facts of life in a "fashionable section of Maryland," which your reporter will avoid like poison if he discovers its location. To give their gabfest a final note of authority, they have arranged to have all the principals talking simultaneously in one scene.

* * *

One of the crowning sins of drama reviewing is to blame authors, producers and directors for derelicts and toss in a good word for the players. In this instance the blame can be shared by every one involved in Edward F. Luckenbach's production. Although there are six featured performers in the cast, only Margaret Hamilton, in a very small maid role, kicks a bad script away and pulls off a pleasant improvization. Perhaps the fact that she does not have to deliver as many awful lines as the rest of the company contributes to a minor triumph in a major disaster. In any case she remembers that the theater should not descend to the level of a dull cocktail party.

* * *

The chief idea of the authors would appear to be that boy meets girl and will surely win her, even with the machinations of her mother and a couple of female friends who decide that she should wed for that green stuff, or lettuce, instead of love. With the help of a voluminous Donald Oenslager setting, the players race on and off stage with the greatest of ease, but they are invariably trapped by the lines. A tolerant first-nighter of my acquaintance remarked: "these are the talkingest damn people I ever seen."

* * *

Shirley Booth has the part of the mother. Neil Hamilton plays a doctor who is more or less in love with her. Anne Sargent projects some broad smiles as the girl and John Hudson plays her impoverished lover. In addition, Doris Dalton talks plenty as the wife of a Washington big shot and John Williams portrays a fall guy publisher. To all of them, our deepest sympathy. They are not good, but they are trapped. They are engaged in the lost cause of demonstrating that a sheer quantity of blabber is a play.

PM EXCLUSIVE

JANUARY 19, 1948

Kronenberger

A Fiendishly Long Play Has a Fatally Short Life

Fernando de Rojas' *Celestina*, if I remember right, has been called the longest play known. But before *The Men We Marry* finally ended, it made *Celestina* seem like a curtain-raiser. Anything longer-winded or shorter-witted than his work of leaden sophistication laid "in a fashionable section of Maryland" would be difficult to conceive. It's called a play, but it's constructed like a filibuster.

* * *

It has to do with three cynical, material-minded, middle-aging women who've pretty well messed up their own lives, and now try to stop the daughter of one of them from marrying a poor young man for love. After what seemed to me so long that the young couple must be darn near middle-aged themselves, they were permitted to marry; and the older girls got married too, or turned noble, or maybe just stopped talking.

A good many experienced performers got mixed up in these doings, and by no means advantageously. It's hard to say whether some of *The Men We Marry* could have been acted any better than it was, but it's safe to say that much of it couldn't have been acted worse. There was one good performance, by John Williams. But he could hardly, single-handed, keep the show going: and so it is gone. It passed into history after Saturday night.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

"Make Mine Manhattan"

The New York Times

JANUARY 16, 1948

AT THE THEATRE

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Being in an amicable mood, they have put together a very pleasant musical revue. They are Arnold B. Horwitt, who has written sketches and lyrics, and Richard Lewine, who has written the music, and they call it "Make Mine Manhattan," which was done at the Broadhurst last evening. Composed largely of good-humored sketches and hurdy-gurdy music, it has more than a passing resemblance to "Call Me Mister," which Mr. Horwitt helped to write; and most of the performers are still in the junior class. But Hassard Short, the old maestro of light and décor, has covered it with shining elegance and given it a gay tempo. Call it "Make Mine Manhattan" for an evening of light entertainment about local affairs.

* * *

For Manhattan foibles are the subject. In the department of humor they are making impish faces at the modern fountain pen, at the ordeal of making Hollywood pictures on our streets, at the qualification for the post of drama critic on local newspapers—a satiric thrust at the ignoble profession. Since David Burns is the only experienced comedian in the cast, the sketches are affable and skimming but not uproarious.

Sid Caesar is the most original item in the program. An amiable product of the local habitat, he can mimic anything from a subway vending machine to a dial telephone or a taxi driver, and rush through it with tremendous speed. Mr. Caesar is imaginative and clever, working in a rich medium. But he is hardly versatile enough yet to carry the humors of a whole evening.

* * *

But Manhattan is full of junior singers and dancers, and the new revue is gayest when they are in charge. Although none of Mr. Lewine's songs has set a new fashion, he can write beguiling tunes, and Mr. Horwitt has written some droll rhymes to fit them. Joshua Shelley does a capital job singing the troubles of a boy who lives in the Bronx. 242d Street, and is courting a girl from New Lots Avenue; and he brings down the house with his analysis of the food content of meals at "Traftz." Eleanor Bagley sings another hilarious song about a movie theatre on Park Avenue so luxuriously appointed that "nobody cares if the picture stinks."

* * *

Sheila Bond, the tornado who did a dance in "Street Scene" last season, shakes the daylights out of a mating brawl in a song with Danny Daniels. There are romantic songs on a roof top by Jack Kilty and Kyle MacDonnell, and another overlooking the East River with some lyric dance accompaniments.

The stoutest number is a gusty parody of "Allegro," with Mr. Caesar making grotesque moral choices. Here Mr. Horwitt really gets down to work and tackles a subject.

'Make Mine Manhattan.'

MAKE MINE MANHATTAN, a revue with sketches and lyrics by Arnold B. Horwitt and music by Richard Lewine. Staged and lighted by Hassard Short; scenery by Frederick Fox; choreography by Lee Sherman; costumes by Morton Haack; sketches directed by Max Liebman; musical director, Charles Sanford; orchestrations by Ted Royal; produced by Joseph M. Hyman. At the Broadhurst Theatr.

Company: Sid Caesar, David Burns, Sheila Bond, Joshua Shelley, Kyle MacDonnell, Jack Kilty, Danny Daniels, Eleanor Bagley, Nelle Fisher, Ray Harrison, Max Showalter, Perry Bruskin, Richard Arnold, Ed Chappel and others.

Without Mr. Short's crisp and princely staging "Make Mine Manhattan" might look like "The Garrick Gaieties" with "Call Me Mister" improvisations. For neither the materials nor the performers are robust. But the tone is fresh and buoyant, the attitude toward Manhattan is affectionate and knowing and the company is light on its feet and unhackneyed. "Make Mine Manhattan" makes a very pleasant Manhattan evening.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

JANUARY 16, 1948

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Too Much Vermouth

A FUNNY fellow called David Burns and the snappy staging of Hassard Short are the chief virtues of "Make Mine Manhattan," the new musical revue which has come to the Broadhurst. The former has a genuine instinct for satirical clowning. The latter has streamlined twenty-two scenes of rather inept dialogue and music into some semblance of a topical take-off on Gotham doings. When Arnold B. Horwitt and Richard Lewine have achieved something of comic consequence in their words and tunes, this Joseph M. Hyman production has a ribald exuberance. There is one good song, "I Fell in Love With You." There is a funny burlesque of drama criticism, "Any Resemblance," in which a half-wit takes over a reviewing job. For most of the time the work is frenetic and pointless.

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No more certain index of the musical's clumsiness need be cited than the fact that it devotes two scenes to lampooning "Allegro," without even realizing a choreographic horse laugh. Agnes de Mille's original dance designs seem very good indeed, compared to the Lee Sherman routines supposedly satirizing her in "Once Over Lightly" and "Ringalevio." The sharp edge of caricature is completely missing in these sketches. What remains are second-rate copies which do not inspire even a bit of bitter laughter. The collaborators on "Make Mine Manhattan" have set up sitting ducks and then missed them by a mile.

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Burns is just about the only member of the company who seems to know how a musical satire should be performed. He is vastly amusing in the number called "First Avenue Gets Ready," greeting delegates to the new site of the U. N. He has an uproarious bit as the retiring drama critic and is equally entertaining as the prospective customer of a fountain pen, who is dunked in a pool to break down his sales resistance. Joshua Shelley assists him on occaion, but it takes more than one knowing comedian to keep twenty-two scenes rolling along hilariously.

Sid Caesar, a graduate of night clubs and movie stage shows, was supposed to have been the big find of the offering, but he has a great deal to learn. His impersonation of automatic vending boxes in "Penny Gum Machine" is hard to take and he only hits his stride in such a number as "Noises in the Street," where he has the invaluable collaboration of Burns. Jack Kilty and Kyle McDonnell do most of the singing and Danny Daniels gives a good account of himself on his feet. For Mayor O'Dwyer's information, there is a sketch, "Hollywood Heads East," which should give him some pause about bringing Hollywood to New York, but even this rich subject for lampooning receives indifferent handling. Incidentally, Moss Hart is thanked for valuable suggestions in connection with the production of "Make Mine Manhattan." He should take a bow very quietly.

Daily Mirror

JANUARY 16, 1948

'Manhattan' Whirls In As New Hit

By ROBERT COLEMAN

"Make Mine Manhattan" is going to make a lot of money for producer Joseph M. Hyman. The new hit at the Broadhurst is a breezy, speedy, intimate topical revue. It moves like a whirlwind and it's packed with laughs.

Author Arnold B. Horwitt and composer Richard Lewine have shunned social significance for sheer entertainment. They are out to amuse and not to spiel. There isn't a soap box anywhere on the stage. And, brother, that's so refreshing.

Horwitt and Lewine kid the daylights out of everything from drama critics to tea rooms, from "Allegro" to those Hollywood film units that have been operating in the East, from Horatio Alger to super-pens that write under water and fly through the air. And their kidding makes sense.

Hyman was lucky in landing Hassard Short to supervise the production. He's a director with taste, who knows how to make the most of the materials at hand. Bows also are due Max Liebman for staging the sketches and Lee Sherman for the lively choreography. Frederick Fox and Morton Haack have designed sets and costumes that are atmospheric if not exactly opulent.

The cast is marvelous. Its members knock themselves out to please the customers. They perform as if they enjoyed the show as much as the ticket holders out front. They are ingratiating, talented and youthful. They don't seem to know the meaning of the word "blase."

Heading the company is the season's comedy find, Sid Caesar, who impersonates philosophic slot machines, a romeo frustrated by high prices and the dizzy modern pace, and Rodgers and Hammerstein's idea of a dentist. The nightclubs are going to be dangling bundles of long green before his eyes.

Others outstanding in the laugh corps are David Burns and Joshua Shelly. Jack Kilty, Kyle MacDonnell and Eleanor Bagley do wonders for the songs. Sheila Bond and Danny Daniels, who clicked in "Street Scene," score with their slapstick and hot hoofing. Ray Harrison and Nelle Fisher do justice to the ballets. And Max Showalter proves himself a helpful jack of all trades.

Sitting near us was a lady who recognizes a howl when she comes across it—Lady Peel, or Beatrice Lillie to you. If she wasn't having a wonderful time, then she's an even greater actress than we think. She roared as lustily as we did.

From now on, chum, you can have your martini. "Make Mine Manhattan!" It will quench your thirst for fun and there isn't a pause in it. But you'd better rush over to the Broadhurst ticket office immediately if you hope to see it soon.

New York Post

JANUARY 16, 1948

'Make Mine Manhattan' Delightful Revue

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

A delightful and even witty revue, which has gaiety, brightness, humor, good looks, pleasant people and brains, opened at the Broadhurst Theatre last night. It also has three good comedians with the proper sort of material, which is a particular blessing, and a point of view, which is something no first-rate revue should be without. It is called "Make Mine Manhattan," and I am making the safest prediction of the season when I tell you it is destined to be a resounding hit. There isn't a dull scene in it.

In fact, there is so much to cheer for that it is a little difficult to know where to begin. It might be just as well to start with the presence of that point of view. It is merely that New York is the craziest, most exasperating and most wonderful city in the world, and that people who don't know it should have the matter straightened out for them at once. The viewpoint in such a show as "Make Mine Manhattan" may seem of only technical interest, but it gives a highly important touch of unity to the proceedings.

Irreverence

Naturally the point of view is both critical and irreverent. The irreverence includes such august targets as "Allergo," the U.N., Mayor O'Dwyer's idea of having movies made in New York, the diggers-up of the city streets, the drama critics, and George Jean Nathan's fur-bearing overcoat. And the criticism can be biting. For example, none of the reviewers who had hard words for "Allergo" were as devastating in pointing to the one grave weakness of that distinguished musical play as the witty parody on its synthetic distaste for city life which is one of the brilliant achievements of "Make Mine Manhattan."

But it is time to be getting around to the comedians. Next to finding a good new playwright there is nothing so cheering in the theatre as coming across a fine clown. Of course, two of them in this case are not exactly discoveries. Indeed, David Burns has long been recognized as one of the stage's true funny men, but here he really emerges as a clown in the great tradition. Joshua Shelley has been appreciated before, too, but in the new revue he proves that he is another legitimate upholder of that tradition. The third, Sid Caesar, actually is a newcomer, and he is a man to place our faith in, for he seems to be an authentic clown. He can also imitate a penny gum machine and a gambling machine, which may not sound funny but is.

Music and Lyrics

There is the promise of a hit

song in "Saturday Night in Central Park" and all of Richard Lewine's music is pleasant, but I prefer Arnold Horwitt's lyrics which are bright and sometimes have real wit in them. And they are sung so you can understand them, which is a comfort. Mr. Horwitt's sketches are also exceptionally good. There should be particular enthusiasm for those about the critics and the effort to make a film in the garment district, as well as the already mentioned one about "Allegro."

Hassard Short's staging provides smoothness, imagination and beauty, and a lot of other people concerned with the show deserve commendation. In particular, three of the girls should be singled out. They are Kyle MacDonnell and Eleanor Bagley, who sing and look well and Sheila Bond, who dances with the fine abandon she revealed so delightfully in the musical "Street Scene" last season. I am sure I have left out other people and numbers deserving of applause, but at least I should have suggested by this time that I have considerable admiration for "Make Mine Manhattan."

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 16, 1948

New Musical Terrific Only Once in a While

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Last night's new musical, "Make Mine Manhattan," takes its title seriously in the broadest sense. It is Broadway without much class and talent without much taste. It has uproariously funny sketches but little other originality as a revue.

The cast is a youthful one and beats itself up as if this were a final audition. This frantic behaviour is spotlighted by the fact that the top comedy in the show is the veteran David Burns, who acts, instead of shadow boxes.

Each time he is in a sketch it seems as if he had signed a contract, while most of the others are still trying to get a job. Burns is effortlessly cunning as a tenant in an apartment being used for a realistic movie background. And he is pathetically uproarious as the guinea pig customer for an under water pen.

Spotted Too Often.

In remarkable contrast to Burns is young Sid Caesar, who appears so many times that he might as well have been starred. No great show comic—Willie Howard, Bert Lahr, even Ed Wynn—would let himself be spotted so often. He would know it would kill him, artistically if not physically. It nearly does both to Caesar. In his last number, his voice is not nearly as courageous as he is.

Caesar has pace and vigor and plenty of comedy sense. He assumes the manner of a long line of night club MCs, and is guilty of lamentable taste. He is certainly not untalented, but misguided.

There is an Iron Lady full of jabs at "Allegro" in a sketch that apes that musical. Even funnier for its sustained japery is the hiring of a new drama critic, a cretin who promises to hate everything he attends.

Sheila Bond Outstanding.

Outstanding among the dancers is the vivid Sheila Bond who caused her own kind of furore in "Street Scene." She has a pert face and a taut figure, and when she dances, she dances all over. She sings with fervor, in a voice that occasionally reveals what she could do with an insinuating blues.

Miss Bond is unfortunately a ringleader of the benzedrine behaviour that characterizes so much of the show. When someone convinces her that there are enough Betty Huttons in the world, and that her talents need not take such a slamming around, she should go far.

Joshua Shelley is of great help in a number of sketches and sings two of the funniest songs in the show. One cuts the habits of a national restaurant chain into fine hamburger, and the other describes the painful subway marathons of a boy from the Bronx with a girl in Brooklyn. He makes the most of both.

Pristine Technique.

There is more dancing by Nellie Fisher with her pristine technique, Danny Daniels who appealingly characterizes his numbers, and several others. The choreography is in de Mille patterns when not in Jack Cole's, and could profit with original ideas.

Max Showalter has a fresh zany quality for sketches, and the sentimental songs are pleasantly enough sung by Jack Kilty, Kyle MacDonnell and Eleanor Bagley. None of the straight lyrics hold a candle to the comic ones—Miss Bagley lingers in mind for a sly description of an intimate high-priced picture house.

With uneven material, Hassard Short has given the show continuity with rising momentum, and staged it with speed.

If all of "Make Mine Manhattan" was on a par with the number about dawn alarms of taxi drivers, milk men and street cleaners, it would be terrific.

The Sun

JANUARY 16, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Make Way for a New Hit.

"Make Mine Manhattan" is a brisk, exuberant and delightful show. This new revue, bringing big-city frenzy and romance and hysteria to the stage of the Broadhurst and introducing some exciting young people in Broadway's song and dance department, arrived in 44th street last night and it will be right there for a year. Probably longer.

It's a compact, well-integrated revue, and one of many assets. There is good sketch material from Arnold B. Horwitt and his excellent lyrics are sung so that you can hear them. Richard Lewine's music is pleasant; the production has been expertly staged and lighted by the master, Hassard Short, and the company includes a new funny man, Sid Caesar, making his bow in the legitimate. The droll David Burns, in his best form, is around, and so is a charming singer, Kyle MacDonnell.

This new "Make Mine Manhattan" has zest and freshness, bringing reminders of the "Little Show" and its sprightly predecessor, the "Garrick Gaieties," and in presenting his new production at the Broadhurst Joseph M. Hyman stuck grimly to strategy devised during the try-out: No encores for the New York premiere and the final curtain down before 11 o'clock. He got away with it. This corner's congratulations are hereby extended.

The sketch that seemed funniest last night was "Hollywood Heads East," in which Sid Caesar, as a big-shot director, and David Burns, as a gentleman of the garment industry, are hilarious. In another sketch Burns wears a fur-collared coat that was surely borrowed yesterday afternoon from George Jean Nathan and he drags on a half-wit named Jukes as his successor as dramatic critic of the Daily Gazette. The publisher wants to know if Jukes has the qualifications. Why, certainly. Jukes is deaf and blind and he loathes the theater. He gets the job.

"Make Mine Manhattan" also offers an imaginative and genuinely amusing burlesque of "Allegro," a number extraordinarily well done. Sid Caesar puts over "A Night Out," comparing Manhattan's prices of 1938 with those of today, with fine effect, and there is a sketch in which Burns appears as a meek little man trying to buy a fountain pen. A big tank, filled with water, is rolled on stage and the comedian is tossed into it. He nearly drowns, but he learns that the new atomic pen will write under water. The show's best song comes along in the pretty first-act finale, "Saturday Night in Central Park."

There is a lot of dancing in the new revue and Sheila Bond and Danny Daniels are rather wonderful at it. The attractive Kyle MacDonnell and Jack Kilty do nicely with the sentimental songs. Eleanor Bagley is a spirited performer all evening and has a good number in "Movie House in Manhattan." Max Showalter is an ingratiating fellow and the talented and useful Joshua Shelley gets a great deal out of a song about a restaurant called "Trafiz," which has a busy branch just across the street from The New York Sun's front door.

You'll have a fine time at "Make Mine Manhattan."

PM EXCLUSIVE

JANUARY 18, 1948

Kronenberger

A Very Gay Musical Of Life in Manhattan

Make Mine Manhattan is the season's brightest and liveliest musical so far, and well worth trying to get into. It doesn't quite rate the more spectacular adjectives; but almost all of it is fun, and a good deal of it is funny. It neatly laces the wit of an intimate revue with the animation of something a trifle larger. It manages to seem youthful without having also to seem young. It has pleasant tunes, and rather better than pleasant dancing. The good skits and spiels outnumber the not-so-good ones, which is meant for high praise; and there are some remarkably good lyrics. And *Make Mine Manhattan* is wonderfully fast-paced. Some day producers will possibly realize how much more decisive in musicals is fast meaning speed than fast meaning sex.

* * *

Furthermore, as you may or may not have grasped from the title, *Make Mine Manhattan* has a theme to hold it together, a point of view to set it apart. It's all about New York—East Side, West Side, noon and midnight, dawn and twilight, sidewalks and rooftops, subways and taxis. And the sense of Manhattan gives it an almost nostalgic unity, however little unity Manhattan has of its own. It also gives us New Yorkers in the audience just that touch of smugness we're entitled to; and assumes of us rather more than a touch of sophistication. One funny ballad kids super-de-luxe movie houses; a funnier ballad kids Schrafft's. There's a suitably stately number about drama critics, in which a newspaper in need of one finds a perfect candidate—he loathes the theater, he can barely see, he can hardly hear, and he's pretty clearly not all there.

Then, to a song called *Phil the Fiddler*, the company's dancers do a stylish spoof of an Alger hero's rise to fame and fortune. There's an admirable ditty in which all those who shatter New Yorkers' sleep – milkmen, street-cleaners, riveters and the like—exult fiendishly in the clatter they can make. There's a funny job about Hollywood big shots shooting pictures in the East; and the show offers the best reason I can think of for seeing *Allegro*—the ability to appreciate *Make Mine Manhattan's* often very funny parody of it.

* * *

The cast—most of it relatively new to Broadway—couldn't be more engaging; but there are times when it could definitely be more deft. Here a song and there a skit needs a little more than is given; which is a real tribute to Arnold Horwitt's wit and brightness, for songs and skits are usually given a little more than they deserve. And possibly the complete newcomer in the show, Sid Caesar, is being used a trifle too often, and misused once—in a slot-machine number. That said, be it quickly said that Mr. Caesar, whose specialty is double-talk, is a many-sided and winning comedian. Joshua Shelley seems to me a very winning one, and David Burns adds greatly to whatever he's a part of. Heading the dancers are Sheila Bond and Danny Daniels, who live up to the splash they created in *Street Scene* last year.

* * *

Much credit is clearly due to all who directed this or that portion of the show, and to Hassard Short for his over-all staging and fine pacing of it. Frederick Fox's backdrops of Manhattan street scenes and skylines are clean and simple, in harmony with a show that spurns even a touch of lavishness. And how little one cares. For if, in the old phrase, all that good drama requires is three walls and a passion, a good revue needs little more than some backdrops and a fresh approach to fun.

—Louis Kronenberger

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 16, 1948

'Make Mine Manhattan' Superbly Staged, Wonderfully Gay Revue

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Run, do not walk, to the Broadhurst Theatre and buy a pair of tickets to the new revue, "Make Mine Manhattan." You can count on having one of the best times you ever had at a show. If you missed the Music Box revues and the first and second Little Shows back in the "good old days," no matter; this one is just as good and sometimes—in the dancing, for instance—it is better.

"Manhattan" is everything a revue should be—which is considerably more than being mere dressed-up vaudeville. It is young and full of high spirits; it is as topical as this copy of today's paper; it is wonderfully funny, and witty, too; its tunes have bounce and so do its dancers; its pace is the pace of New York—quick and busy every minute. And its company is enchantingly friendly.

A Lively Pace.

Since everybody connected with "Make Mine Manhattan" deserves praise for something, it is hard to know where to begin, but if I must start off with one among so many I'll pick Arnold B. Horwitt for his sketches and lyrics. Mr. Horwitt, who did some good things for "Call Me Mister" when he was in the army, has written a number of uproarious skits and some trim and graceful song lyrics. Richard Lewine has provided the lyrics with pleasant, gay music.

Then there is Hassard Short, who staged the production. Mr. Short has driven the show from the opening to the closing—22 numbers in all—like Ben Hur winning the big chariot race. Nobody is permitted to take a bow; numbers which would ordinarily be show-stoppers are put aside when they are finished and the next ones are whisked on.

There are two first class comedians, Sid Caesar and David Burns. Mr. Caesar has come up from the night clubs and Mr. Burns is an old-timer. Mr. Caesar can out-talk Danny Kaye, and is much more amusing. At various times he impersonates, single-handed, a United Nations assembly; a penny gum machine, a dial telephone, a headwaiter and an Italian restaurateur who mixes salad dressing. He compares what a boy could do with his girl on $5 in 1938 and what he can do with two months' pay tonight. He is an entertainer of great talent.

Mr. Burns is grand in many numbers — best, I guess, in the sketch in which he buys a fountain pen and is forced to submit to a demonstration. The demonstration includes his being diarobed, dumped into a glass tank and made to write under water.

I'd like to tell you about all the numbers—but can't now, and maybe I shouldn't, so you can have the fun of discovering them yourself. But I must mention Joshua Shelley's singing of an acutely mirthful ode to Schrafft's Restaurant and Eleanor Bagley's song about a de luxe Park Avenue movie theatre.

Critics Get It Good.

And you must know about the drama critic sketch, in which Mr. Burns, who is retiring as a reviewer, brings to replace him his friend Jukes. Jukes' qualifications are perfect: he has never seen a play, he can't see very well, he can't hear and he has several ills of the nose and throat.

Lee Sherman's dance numbers are refreshing and unhackneyed, and the dancers, who include Sheila Bond, Danny Daniels, Nelle Fisher and Ray Harrison, all are able. In one splendid sketch, a parody of "Allegro," Mr. Sherman makes some very clever fun of Agnes de Mille.

Pleasant, indeed, are the singers, among them being Jack Kilty, Kyle MacDonnell and Miss Bond —who, by the way, is a little show all by herself. Frederick Fox's settings are smart, and Morton Haack, who dressed "Strange Bedfellows" so nicely, has turned out some more pretty costumes.

Producer Joseph B. Hyman is to be congratulated for presenting a revue which is always in good taste and fun every minute.

Journal and American

JANUARY 16, 1948

A Fresh, Brash Revue With Fine Sketches

By ROBERT GARLAND

If, as producer of a topical revue, you want to make sure of good write-ups in the papers, insert a sketch in which members of The Drama Critics' Circle are held up to scorn and ridicule.

Then, in a protective effort to show how magnanimous they are those members of The Drama Critics' Circle will give your topical revue a grand and glorious send-off.

Joseph Hyman, as producer of the topical revue which came last night into the Broadhurst, has inserted a sketch—"Any Resemblance" is the title—in which the members of The Drama Critics Circle are held up to scorn and ridicule. And, as one member of that curious collection of whipping boys, I'm here to see that Mr. Hyman gets a good write-up in my paper.

Scorn and ridicule, or no scorn and ridicule, "Make Mine Manhattan" is worthy of a grand and glorious send-off. It's young, fresh and brashly entertaining. And, after all, its sketch about the critics is funny without being truthful, blaming us for the few shortcomings we do not possess. For lighting lighters, carrying canes, eating peanuts, yoo-hoo-ing to one another.

If Joseph Hyman had seen fit to ask me, I could have written him a sketch to make 'The Drama Critics' Circle turn over in its grave at the Hotel Algonquin. But, alas, he didn't!

* * *

Other Sketches

There're other sketches in the new show at the Broadhurst, although, so far, you wouldn't think so. There's "First Avenue Gets Ready," in which Sid Caesar pretends to be three United Nations delegates at the same time.

There's "Once Over Lightly," in which 'Allegro" is given the run around and, since pre-Broadway days, Oscar Hammerstein II has been changed to Lawrence Langer I.

There's "Hollywood Heads East," in which, during the course of movie-making on Manhattan, a couple of old cloak-and-suiters get together. And there's "Full Fathom Five," in which The Customer stops by a shop to buy a fountain pen.

All these are satirical and zestful. And come to think of them, no more scornful and ridiculous than the one about the drama critic Mr. Jukes.

These sketches are interspersed with this and that ballet. An Horatio Alger number, which is charming and original. An Agnes de Mille nose-thumbing during the spoofing of "Allegro." The "Saturday Night in Central Park" and the "Homecoming in Grand Central Station"—not "Terminal," as the owners call it—which bring the first and second stanzas to their ends . . .

Those interludes are entrusted for the most part to Sid Caesar, David Burns and Joshua Shelley, Sheila Bond, Danny Daniels and Nelle Fisher. Of Mr. Caesar, you get a fulsome evening.

* * *

Too Much of Sid

Admitting that, in "Make Mine Manhattan," Sid Caesar is a good thing, you can get too much of him. Especially when he's breaking your heart with his autobiography of a chewing gum machine or breaking his heart by comparing a night out in 1934 with a night out in 1948. He's best, I hink, when not imitating mechanical devices.

The others do nicely whenever Mr. Caesar leaves the stage for rest or relaxation. David Burns, who does almost anything but imitations, is a "Make Mine Manhattan" mainstay.

Joshua Shelley is good in "Any Resemblance," better in "Noises in the Street"—which is wonderful—and best in the song about Schrafft's which, of a certainty, was inspired by a publicity man from Childs'.

And so it goes, with Eleanor Bagley's vocal low down on "A Movie House in Manhattan," Mr. Caesar's and Mr. Burns' rendition of "The Good Old Days," the aforesaid "Noises in the Street," provided by a taxi driver, a milkman, a street cleaner, a street digger and a newsboy; the "Subway Song," in which She lives in Brooklyn and He lives in the Bronx; "Any Resemblance," in which—

Well, back to where your scorned and ridiculed drama critic started, "Make Mine Manhattan" just has to have a good write-up in this paper. I'm thankful it so frequently deserves it!

"Strange Bedfellows"

New York Herald Tribune

JANUARY 15, 1948

By HOWARD BARNES

Fun On Nob Hill

FOR the better part of two acts "Strange Bedfellows" is a boisterous period piece, jesting merrily about the adventures and misadventures of a suffragette in the San Francisco of 1896. Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements have written their new comedy at the Morosco broadly and with evident relish. Benno Schneider has paced it with vigor and variety in his direction and there is a wonderful Nob Hill setting by Ralph Alswang. In addition, some expert comedians realize most of the inflections in the burlesque, from comparatively deft satirical touches to raucous slapstick. Unfortunately the joking grows tiresome before the ending.

At its best the production is full of color and laughter. The discomfiture of a conservative Senator and his family when a zealous crusader for women's rights intrudes herself on the scene as the son's new wife, is vastly entertaining. All is of a piece in the early scenes. The scenry, the Morton Haack costumes, the acting and the writing blend in a fine and ribald unity. The struggle of the patriarch and the feminine upstart from the East is a matter of some suspense as well as amusement, while there is a hilarious passage in the second act in which a madam from the Barbary Coast calls on prim ladies organized against the suffrage movement.

* * *

Had the authors held to a sort of "Life With Father" on Nob Hill they might have composed a comedy of consequence as well as a show of occasional enjoyment. Their inspiration runs thin after a gala start and there is a tedious excursion into the "Lysistrata" theme which leaves even the best of the players floundering. The spectacle of Victorian ladies running around the stage in negligees is not very funny, nor is that of their gentlemen getting inebriated as a result of their plot. The comedy lags with the situations. Most of the good lines in the work are used up before the third act commences.

* * *

Joan Tetzel dominates the performing as the suffragette who alternately wins and loses support for her cause. Right behind her in putting the play's best foot forward is Carl Benton Reid, as the explosive political boss who accepts her willingly enough as a daughter-in-law, but not as an opponent. John Archer is fine for most of the time as the lady's husband, who is content to disagree with her until she kicks over the apple cart and then joins her in her crusade. Ruth Amos is excellent as the mother, Nydia Westman is properly silly and Doris Rich gives a magnificent portrayal of a Barbary Coast madam. Together they create a lot of entertainment in "Strange Bedfellows," but it drains away.

'STRANGE BEDFELLOWS.'

Comedy by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements; directed by Benno Schneider; scenery and lighting by Ralph Alswang; costumes by Morton Haack; presented by Philip A. Waxman at the Morosco Theater Wednesday evening, January 14, 1948. The cast:

Ling ..... Tom Chung Yun
Senator William Cromwell ..... Carl Benton Reid
Julia Cromwell ..... Ruth Amos
Beulah ..... Leta Bonynge
Addie Cromwell Hampton ..... Nydia Westman
Lillian Hampton ..... Mary Kay Jones
Nickey ..... Billy Nevard
Mrs. Gimble ..... Frieda Altman
Mrs. Worley ..... Marion Weeks
Gifford Hampton ..... Robin Craven
Vincent Pemberton ..... Michael Hall
Matthew Cromwell ..... John Archer
Clarissa Blynn Cromwell ..... Joan Tetzel
Mrs. Tillie Sparker ..... Doris Rich
Mayor Ambrose Tibbett ..... William Lee
Birdie ..... Ruth Miles
Zita ..... Ann Thompson
Opal ..... Stephanie Foster

SYNOPSIS: The action takes place in the winter-parlor of Senator Cromwell's mansion on Nob Hill, San Francisco, in the fall of 1896. ACT I. Scene 1. Afternoon in October. Scene 2. The following Sunday morning. ACT II. Scene 1. Tuesday afternoon. Scene 2. Some hours later. ACT III. Later that night.

Journal American

JANUARY 15, 1948

Broad Fun Abounds In Sure-Fire Farce

By ROBERT GARLAND

There're broad laughs and bawdy fun in "Strange Bedfellows," the Florence Ryerson-Colin Clements farce Philip Waxman sponsors at the Morosco. A gaudy period-piece of San Francisco's votes-for-women days, the ornate Ralph Alswang setting and the lush Morton Haack costumes have much to do with the piece's over-all technicolor flavor.

No, this "Strange Bedfellows" is no revival of the Barry Conners farce of the same name produced by Carl Reed at Henry Miller's Theatre in 1924. But it's motivated by the same women-in-politics motivation; wife against husband, husband against wife, and, after no little Lysistratanising, a denouement with unmistakable commitments.

In one "Strange Bedfellows" or another, this is sure-fire farcical material. And last night's congregation, smacking more of Hollywood than Broadway, enjoyed it wholeheartedly. Especially when the Mrs. Grundys of The Hill and the Mrs. Warrens of The Coast get themselves together, sisters, and therefore enemies, under their skins.

From then on, it's Lysistrata herself brought down from B. C. 411 to A. D. 1896, from the Acropolis in Greece to Nob Hill in California.

• • •

Draws Deep Laughter

And if, in Greece or in California, I've yet to find the married women's holdout as funny as it should be, it's too late to do anything about it. So the truth is that the Florence Ryerson-Colin Clements "Strange Bedfellows" affords me the most amusment before the game of Lysistrata enters the on-stage conversation.

But let me tell you that young Matthew Cromwell, Senator William Cromwell's personable offspring, comes home to the Cromwell's new family mansion bringing his unblushing bride with him. She's the famous Clarissa Blynn, a votes-for-women Venus who prefers a soapbox to a sofa, a banner to a bonnet, a vote to —

Well, she thinks she does until her Lysistrata movement flops and, along with her mother and her sister, she once more joins the gentlemen — Matthew, William and Gifford, in the order named — and the war between the sexes is over for the evening in the Cromwell's new family mansion on the summit of Nob Hill.

It's been jolly for them, and for the more-Hollywood-than-Broadway first-nighters, whose laughs come from down under and whose fun is earthy.

• • •

Excellent Acting

The acting's excellent. Most excellent is the acting of Ruth Amos as Julia Cromwell, the wise, worldly, loving wife of Senator William Cromwell. The Senator himself is excellent in the hands of Carl Benton Reid. And their Matthew is safe and sound in the hands of John Archer.

Matthew's votes-for-women bride is Joan Tetzel, without the printed permission of David O. Selznick. Hints of Hollywood hang haphazardly about her. Nydia Westman is less West Coastian as Addie, the Cromwell of the species who isn't what you might call bright. But the Mrs. Sparkler of Doris Rich is my favorite female.

There're a dozen-and-a-half players under Benno Schneider's direction. With his name in type rivaling that of the authors, Mr. Schneider does right well by them when you consider that he's used to working in the two flat dimensions of the movies. Mr. Alswang's setting remains "ornate," Mr. Haack's costumes remain "lush."

Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements have their own little Governor's Lady-and-Judy-O'Grady joke in this new "Strange Bedfellows." But I'd have laughed louder, longer and more often if they'd kept Lysistrata out of it!

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 15, 1948

'Strange Bedfellows' a Handsome And Funny Play About Old 'Frisco

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Florence Ryerson and her husband, Colin Clements, who wrote a quaint, proper and successful play about Harriet Beecher Stowe for Helen Hayes, have written a gusty and colorful comedy about old San Francisco titled "Strange Bedfellows." This play, which made its debut last evening at the Morosco Theatre, has been blessed with a fascinatingly gaudy setting by Ralph Alswang, delightful costumes by Morton Haack and by some amusing performances by Carl Benton Reid, Joan Tetzel, Nydia Westman, Doris Rich and several others.

There is no doubt about "Bedfellows" being funny, and we first-nighters enjoyed ourselves more than we had in quite some time; but it could be better, if not funnier. For an act and a half Miss Ryerson and Mr. Clements have a superior comedy—a play about the woman's suffrage movement in San Francisco in 1896. For the next act and a half they muddle around with farce, instead of comedy, as if they didn't know how good a thing they had and were a little uncertain about what to do next.

The setting is the Nob Hill home of Senator William Cromwell, a buccaneer of the Crocker-Stanford-Huntington stamp. The place is all filled with phonographs, speaking tubes and decorative horrors that it cannot be described better than it is by Beulah the parlor maid. "Tomorrow," says Beulah, "is Dust the Statuary Day."

Votes for Women New Cry.

To this home the Senator's son, also in politics, brings his bride, who is a pretty, militant and well known suffragist. The bride upsets the household no end—and it is quite a household, as full of relatives as it is of knickknacks.

She is, of course, opposed by the gentlemen—and by the ladies, too, at first. Women's place is in the home, and let the men run the world. But pretty Clarissa soon wins the women by pointing out that their own league against suffrage is supported by the inmates and operators of the bawdy houses of the Barbary Coast, just down Nob Hill; the Coasters don't want the status quo upset by any feminine reforms.

One of the most enjoyable scenes of the play concerns the visit of Miss Rich, playing the madam of a down-hill establishment, to the Senator's home to partake of tea with the ladies. It is capitally done.

Goes Off Into Farce.

For an act and a half, as I say, "Strange Bedfellows" is a comedy of character and purpose. Then it rattles off into bedroom farce, a drinking scene, horseplay about a dummy mayor and a raid upon the abodes of ill fame. Frankly, I enjoyed most of these scenes, though I'd have liked to shorten some of them; but at the end I felt that the authors had missed having something superior because they didn't realize they could have had it.

Miss Tetzel is alluring as the suffragette and John Archer is likable as her husband. Mr. Reid makes a picturesque Senator and Ruth Amos works quietly and effectively as his sensible wife. It is very pleasant to have fluttery, quavery Miss Westman back with us in the role of the Senator's daughter, and Robin Craven is a walking daugerreotype as Miss Westman's husband.

Benno Schneider has directed the whole thing quite amiably, with the right emphasis on the punch lines and exit lines which the authors have supplied in plenty. I should think you'd have a good time at "Strange Bedfellows," and let the art of dramaturgy go hang.

The Sun

JANUARY 15, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

More Atmosphere Than Play.

Our theater reached back into the Nineties last night, to the San Francisco of '96, and came up with a well-upholstered and clamorous comedy called "Strange Bedfellows," put together by the wife-and-husband writing team of Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements. The new piece is tenanting the Morosco and you can probably hear the uproar if you're anywhere in that vicinity.

Here's a manufactured, American-past comedy about the ruction brought to the exclusive Nob Hill section by the women's suffrage movement, and it's the recital of the victory of a bride over a bridegroom who was fighting the cause. But how could the votes-for-women amendment have lost when it had a leader as enchanting as Joan Tetzel?

"Strange Bedfellows" achieves some nice moments, those in which Miss Tetzel is holding forth, and it manages to be intermittently funny in a boisterous way, but it overflows with the drama's familiar ingredients. The action includes a sex strike by the wives, in the fashion of Lysistrata and her followers. It has one of those scenes in which disturbed gentlemen get resolutely tight. There also is a police raid (on the Barbary Coast, down the hill a piece), and a general reconciliation and a triumph for the suffragettes.

Joan Tetzel, back for the first time since "I Remember Mama," is an intelligent and delightful actress, and she is quite wonderful to look upon in the period costumes of Morton Haack. John Archer, always an asset to a play, is the masterful bridegroom who succumbs to his wife's charm and good sense. If there were stock companies around today Archer would be the perfect leading man.

Carl Benton Reid, who has had some bitter roles hereabouts, gets a lot of comical gusto into his playing as the roaring Senator who opposes suffrage and practically everything else. Rofio Craven has an ingratiating way with comedy. Nydia Westman and Ruth Amos help the Cause along and there is an amusing and flamboyant performance from Doris Rich as a hearty brothel keeper. Benno Schneider has sought to heighten the play's farcical values in his direction and Ralph Alswang's 1896 interior is stunning.

But "Strange Bedfellows" remains a broad, trivial and straggling comedy. The cast, and the production accessories, are considerably better than the play.

Daily Mirror

JANUARY 15, 1948

'Bedfellows' Brings Out Many Laughs

By ROBERT COLEMAN

If you're looking for laughs don't miss "Strange Bedfellows," the Florence Ryerson-Colin Clements comedy, which Philip A. Waxman installed in the Morosco Theatre last evening. It had the first-nighters roaring louder and longer than we recall at any time this season.

Mr. and Mrs. Clements have set their play in a San Francisco mansion on Nob Hill in the year 1896. Its owner is one of the hardy men who came from the East to establish civilization in California and to garner a fortune in the process.

Sen. Cromwell and his family are surprised when son Matthew returns from a term in Congress, bringing a pretty bride. And the Senator is shocked to his spats to learn that the charming girl is, of all things, a suffragette.

Soon young Mrs. Cromwell has converted the distaff side of the Cromwell household to feminism by proving that men have misused their votes and power. And when the Cromwell men attempt to bully them into submission, they steal a leaf from "Lysistrata" and deny their martial privileges.

Frustrated, the Cromwell males resort to trickery to best their mates, only to be outwitted at their own game. Eventually the proud papas of Nob Hill have to admit defeat, and not only permit the determined mamas to hold their meetings, but agree to sit on the platforms while the speeches are being delivered.

"Strange Bedfellows" is one of the funniest plays to arrive here in several semesters and it could have been one of the finest had its authors dialogued it with a little more depth. They have been content to settle for riotous farce, when they might have achieved the level of genuine satire.

It is cut from the same comedy bolt as "Volpone" and "Morale." It is robust humor based on recognizable traits of human nature. It makes you think a little, while you laugh a lot.

The cast is one of the best of this or any season. It includes Carl Benton Reid, Ruth Amos, Joan Tetzel, John Archer, Nydia Westman, Robin Craven, Doris Rich, Michael Hall, Mary Kay Jones, Frieda Altman and Marion Weeks.

Miss Tetzel and Archer handle the romance persuasively, while Miss Amos and Reid do notably well by the older generation. Miss Rich, as a lusty personage from the Barbary Coast, and Miss Amos team for a scene that is not only moving but capable of wrecking your laughing apparatus.

The direction by Benno Schneider, the set by Ralph Alswang and the costumes by Morton Haack also merit salutes.

"Strange Bedfellows," like "Life With Father," is nostalgic Americana. It will make you howl delightedly at the good old days and then wonder if they weren't mighty wonderful.

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 15, 1948

'Strange Bedfellows' Hilarious in Spots

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Anyone who has read about San Francisco in the Nineties will have a fine time with "Strange Bedfellows." So will most other people, in fact.

That was high-riding time for the gentlemen and an elegant time for the ladies. Riches and scruples were equally easy. It was also the time of awakening for the modern woman, the Turn of the Century Girl, and this show reveals how the Suffragette bored from within the home.

A militant feminist is brought as a sudden bride to her husband's large family of domineering males and submissive ladies. In the face of unanimous disapproval, she divides the solid camp into a war between sexes by quoting man-made laws, and proving how the less moral element supports any fight against feminism.

Try Rule of Celibacy.

The women draw on the ingenuity of Lysistrata to undermine the men with a rule of celibacy. But these men have not been away to any wars, and the plan is a flop.

By enlisting the aid of a delightful madame, the girls get a list of property owners in the Barbary Coast district. Armed with such dynamite for blackmail, they assure themselves of the men's presence at a meeting to favor women's votes.

The play has one of the most solidly funny scenes on record, and another that is not far behind. In between, it rides along, even sags sometimes, preparing the way for the hilarity.

When Mrs. Tillie Sparker leaves the Red Rooster, inadvertently

to attend the ladies' antifeminist meeting in the Nob Hill mansion, the laughs are rampant. And when the mistress of the mansion goes to save the lady of the house from a raid, the results are nearly as spirited.

A Pendulum Affair.

Despite some first-rate playing both the Lysistrata episode, and the drunk scene following it, are repetious. The long-drawn-out battle between the bride and bridegroom is a pendulum affair that loses sight of the play's main course.

But even these spots, where humor grows strained, are not unpleasant. In a leisurely way they suffer by comparison with the more ingenious moments.

The fun is to watch the hypocritical peak of the pioneers' quick success tremble with a promise of more honest values. The setting is a monument to Victorian shelter, busy with brocades, trite statuary and whistling tubes to call the servants. In sight, out of the window, is the Barbary Coast, which it is polite to consider invisible. But it is the hearty old queen who comes up the hill from there, who brings on at least an intramural facing of facts.

Dazzling Costumes.

The set and the costumes are dazzling and rich, and the big cast is fine.

One naturally expects a lot from the principals, and they deliver. Memory lingers over the lusty class of Doris Rich, the fresh beauty of Mary Kay Jones, and the squirmy tight trousers of young Billy Nevard.

This is not a play to be analyzed, because any stickler could find objections. It is a show with great good fun in it, and one which has a distinct capacity for being ribald without being offensive.

New York Post

JANUARY 15, 1948

'Strange Bedfellows' Has Sex and Suffrage

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

There can't be any vast critical admiration for "Strange Bedfellows," a comedy about the woman suffrage movement in the San Francisco of 1896, which opened at the Morosco Theatre last night. With a nod in the direction of "Lysistrata," Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements have written a frankly mechanical farce that usually sounds like a musical-comedy libretto with the music left out. But there is something so cheerfully shameless about the way they go after their comic effects that their play manages to engender a lot of laughter. This, I believe, is what Broadway sages call an audience, rather than a critics' show.

I confess that I found it nostalgically comforting to come across a play that has some of the qualities of the old-time bedroom farces. As I recall it, such works used to be condemned as leering and prurient, and were scorned accordingly. It may indicate something or other about this age, or mine, that the same sort of effects, so studiously sought after in "Strange Bedfellows," seemed to me rather appealing in their old-fashioned, primitive charm. The "Lysistrata" motif is certainly not handled with notable grace, but it is still good for its share of hilarity.

Best Scene

There is another farcical idea of almost equal antiquity that results in the new play's best scene. It is, of all things, the time-honored episode in which some puritanically respectable women have a nice little chat with the proprietress of a bordello without suspecting her profession, and ask a lot of questions about her girls. As you can see, it is not exactly high-toned comedy, and there is assuredly nothing fresh about it, but it is so well played by Doris Rich that it is inescapably funny.

Perhaps there is also something a little comforting about the way the authors never do anything unexpected or unorthodox about either their comedy or their occasional serious moments. And it is to their credit that the earnest phases of their story are few and hasty, for they are not at their best when on the verge of getting dramatic about the cause of the woman voter or the problem of husband and wife with differing political ideas. The plot, by the way, has to do with a young Congressman who weds a beautiful suffrage worker and takes her to live at the home of his blustering and reactionary father, which happens to be near the red-light district.

A Formula

Since I can find interest in the theatre in various ways, I was entertained to note the problems the authors faced with their hero and heroine. It has to go according to formula. The heroine must be triumphant, but prove at the climax that she is weak and clinging. The husband must lose the argument, but show that he is the dominant male at the proper time. It has to be worked out carefully and here things are greatly aided by the casting. Joan Tetzel, one of the loveliest-looking girls in the theatre, is also an excellent actress, and John Archer is just about the best romantic leading man the stage has left. As the politically-minded couple they are of immense help to the comedy.

Indeed, it is all well acted, particularly by Carl Benton Reid as the reactionary father, Ruth Amos as the wise pioneer mother, Nydia Westman as a timid anti-suffragist who changes her viewpoint, Robin Craven as her slow-witted husband and, of course, Doris Rich as that visitor. Ralph Alswang's setting is brightly atmospheric and Benno Schneider's direction helps. "Strange Bedfellows" is synthetic but amusing theatrical trivia.

The New York Times

JANUARY 15, 1948

'Strange Bedfellow,' by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements, Is Comedy About Battle of the Sexes

By BROOKS ATKINSON

With a little assistance from Aristophanes, Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements have written a comedy about the battle of the sexes, "Strange Bedfellows," which was put on at the Morosco last evening. Since the authors are married, they probably are acquainted with the battle of the sexes which day by day is exhausting the manpower of the world.

But Mr. and Mrs. Clements, being merchants of the easy laugh, are too smart to write what they know. They have artfully put together popular comedy about a family that is split straight down the middle on the political question of votes for women.

* * *

The setting, by Ralph Alswang, is the parlor of a San Francisco mansion in 1896. As in the case of "Life With Father," this supplies the comedy with the theatrical décor of old-fashioned costumes and furniture, and a feeling of sentimental superiority in the audience. But the Nob Hill, San Francisco, setting has another advantage. It is within sight of the gaudy Barbary Coast. To give their audience something really to laugh about, the authors introduce a madame to some respectable ladies, which is, of course, devastatingly funny; and they are back and forth between the brothels and high society all evening. As hucksters of the laugh, they stoop to conquer and now and then take a frisky roll in the gutter.

* * *

While the audience was roaring its sex-starved head off, your correspondent fell gloomily to wondering why people laugh so heartily at the mention of a brothel. There must be some particularly nasty reason for such roars of delight. For Mr. and Mrs. Clements are not humorists. They have accomplished the remarkable feat of writing an entire comedy without writing a single witty line or coming up with anything but mechanical ideas.

Young Gifford Hampton, who does not believe in votes for women, has married the leading American suffragette. His whole family is shocked by her militant politics—father, who is an autocrat of the old school; sister-in-law, who is a nitwit; brother-in-law, who is an ass, and even mother, who has some native wit. But the militant feminist quickly wins the women to her side, which leads into Aristophanes' ancient jest about a boycott of the women against their husbands. And this, in turn, leads to the brothels again.

"Strange Bedfellows" has been directed by Benno Schneider, celebrated in Gotham some years ago for his progressive direction of the Artef group. You would hardly believe it now. For he has staged the Clements piece like an Al Woods farce. Carl Benton Reid gives an intelligent comedy performance as the irascible father, and Ruth Amos has grace and style as the mother.

* * *

But as a whole the performance has the pace and style of a freshman cane rush on a college campus, and anything an actor accomplishes in the scramble is by accident. Joan Tetzel manages to retain a little charm and spirit in the breathless part of the feminist, and Mary Kay Jones contrives some amusing coquetry as a rebellious maiden. Michael Hall is pleasantly fatuous as a very young and very solemn youth. As the nitwit sister-in-law, Nydia Westman has brought back the dazed and gauche vaudeville style she made likeable when she was operating in those parts several years ago.

But "Strange Bedfellows," being hokum comedy, has bred a hokum performance, and none of the actors can be especially proud of what he is doing. The audience laughed uproariously at the parts regarded as spicy. No doubt an audience would laugh if a brothel-keeper fell down and broke her leg.

PM EXCLUSIVE

JANUARY 16, 1948

Kronenberger

A Bit of Suffrage And a Barrel of Sex

In *Strange Bedfellows*, the authors of *Harriet* are once again on the side of progress and the fast buck. Having helped to free the slaves in 1943, they now take up the cudgels for woman suffrage; and this time they won't need Helen Hayes to make a go of their crusade. Large numbers of people will be flocking to their play about sexual emancipation—or could it just be a play about sex? Could it, in fact, just be a completely machine-made, bedroom-farce-broad, comic-strip-boisterous play about sex? It could indeed; it is indeed; and maybe you won't care much for it, either.

* * *

Strange Bedfellows takes place in San Francisco, in the Nob Hill mansion of Sen. William Cromwell, in 1896. The Senator, undoubtedly a Western cousin of Clarence Day's father, is violently opposed to rights for women. Lo and behold, and right during an election, his son Matt marries and brings home an ardent and beautiful suffragette. She soon has the women of the house lined up on her side against the men; and a battle royal ensues, or at least a battle ribald. Comes night; and the ladies, remembering their *Lysistrata*, stage a sex strike and bolt their bedroom doors. The husbands (three in all; it's a large house) take to drink and then weave Barbary-Coast-wards. There's much dashing about in frilled nighties, and much commotion generally, before Women's Rights are honored and men's rights are restored.

* * *

Miss Ryerson and Mr. Clements certainly keep shooting in one thing after another, so that you constantly wonder "What next?"—unless, as is fairly frequent, you know. For it's all done along such familiar lines, that *Strange Bedfellows* has very few surprises. In fact, it could almost bear the subtitle of Scenes From Old Plays. In addition to the scene where the gents get drunk, there's the one, for example, where the frightfully genteel tea-drinking ladies take to chatting with the madam of a bawdy house without knowing who she is. And in addition to the episodes frankly patterned upon *Lysistrata*, there are scenes reminiscent of *Life With Father*, *Bloomer Girl*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and God knows how many bedroom farces and assorted skits.

It is all lavishly produced and loudly performed. Ralph Alswang has done a colorfully ugly period set that seems to me quite good; and Benno Schneider has directed the play very much as though it were a musical comedy, which is probably quite sound. Certainly John Archer, as Matt, has the precise virtues of a musical-comedy hero; Joan Tetzel, as the lovely suffragette, seems a rather more believable heroine. Carl Benton Reid has the proper bellow as the Senator, and Ruth Amos and Nydia Westman do very nicely as his wife and married daughter. But *Strange Bedfellows* is hardly a play to be acted. It can only be over-acted and, truth to tell, it is.

—Louis Kronenberger

"Power Without Glory"

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 14, 1948

'Power Without Glory' Good Job Of Acting a British Psychodrama

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The best English thriller since "Angel Street" came to the Booth Theatre last evening under the ill-chosen title of "Power Without Glory." It is what we all now call a psychological melodrama, which means that it is full of tricks and hokum, and it is very well acted by a company of visitors who seem mostly to have been recruited from London's television stations.

If Alfred Hitchcock or one of J. Arthur Rank's film producers is to make a movie of this play by Michael Clayton Hutton—and surely somebody will——the first thing he'll do is junk the title, which has too fancy a sound, and get down to cases by calling it "The Corpse at the Foot of the Stair" or "Who Mordered the Tomato?"

Family In on Crime.

"Power Without Glory" is not a whodunit, for, although a murder has been committed offstage, no mystery is made over how it happened. The author admits how it happened readily enough, but what interests him more—and me, too—is why it happened and what it does to the people who know about it.

The people who know about it are a family of shopkeepers named Lord in London—a patient, mousy father, an overworked and courageous mother, two grown sons and an adolescent daughter. Also present are a comic character female and a girl who once fell in love with one of the sons and now is in love with the other. It's quite a love, this second one; even the girl says right out loud that she herself can't understand how she can love a boy and despise him at the same time. Pure hoke, of course, but convincing.

Miss Newell Intense.

One never meets the victim because by the time one gets to the theatre she is lying at the foot of the steps leading to the Thames, dead. Both of the Lord boys had known her and she had become pregnant. Any follower of British thrillers knows that the most interesting condition a girl can get into is to become dead.

Mr. Hutton's tale is slickly spun and it has pace, which British thrillers do not always have. A fiery young actress named Joan Newell does a remarkable job as the adolescent daughter who eavesdrops on the stair, hears a murder confession and disrupts family loyalty by dashing out into the rain to snitch to the police. Marjorie Rhodes is quietly effective as the courageous mother.

The girl who loves so eagerly is nicely played by Hilary Liddell, and a typically British job of good underplaying is done by Trevor Ward as the father. Peter Murray makes a hysterical younger brother and Lewis Stringer a steadfast elder one. (Stringer is the one who, recently out of the war, is trying to find himself—to find his lost power. In the events surrounding the murder he regains his power but there's no glory with it—hence the title.) Helen Misener makes an admirable comedy character.

If you like to hear good British actors talk their quaint tongue and to have a few thrills and chills, you should find "Power Without Glory" okay.

'POWER WITHOUT GLORY.'

Play by Michael Clayton Hutton; staged by Chloe Gibson; setting by Charles Elson; presented by John C. Wilson and the Shuberts at the Booth Theater Tuesday evening, January 13, 1948. The cast:

Flo	Joan Newell
Maggie	Marjorie Rhodes
Edith	Helen Misener
Eddie	Lewis Stringer
Anna	Hilary Liddell
Cliff	Peter Murray
John	Trevor Ward

SYNOPSIS: The action takes place in the John Lords' living-room in the rear of a London shop. Act I. Scene 1: A winter evening, 5:30. Scene 2: Half an hour later. Act II. A few minutes later. Act II. An hour later.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

JANUARY 14, 1948

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Just Misses Glory

AN able cast has less aid from an author than it deserves in "Power Without Glory." The British psychological melodrama at the Booth flickers uncertainly. When the author, Michael Clayton Hutton, is creating a realistic atmosphere and filling it with the tension of a shared secret of murder, there are moments of ominous excitement in this importation. Virtually all of the visiting players take full advantage of these interludes. Joan Newell, Helen Misener, Hilary Liddell and Lewis Stringer are new faces for most local first-nighters, but they are well worth noting. If only "Power Without Glory" got to its dramatic point, they would make it something of a theatrical event.

* * *

As it is Hutton has built up savage rhythms in his play without welding them into a melodramatic crescendo. His premise is as sound as a nut and he has the members of a London shopkeeper's family learn that one of them has beaten a girl to death on the embankment. More than one scene is touched off with explosive spiritual violence. But the work resolves itself into tableaux and long conversational set-tos instead of developing into a real and illuminating clash of character. Incidentally, the staging by Chloe Gibson favors attitudinizing rather than a relentless exploration of fear and devotion.

* * *

Perhaps the author became so fascinated with his characters that he could not view them with proper objectivity in fusing his plot into a dramatic unity. The plight of Anna, torn between her love for a murderer and wonderment that his brother would jeopardize his life to make her happy with him is an articulate and powerful theme, but it is always being interrupted by more or less irrelevent stage business. The climax leaves matters in considerable disorder. Two of the characters remark on different occasions that the horrible mess in which they are involved is "something you read about, but don't expect to have happen to you." "Power Without Glory" would possibly make better reading than seeing in the theater.

* * *

It is certainly no fault of the company. Miss Liddell is wonderfully volatile and convincing as the unhappy girl loved by two brothers. Stringer plays an ex-soldier with forthright and engaging force and Peter Murray is fine as the man who confesses his guilt at almost the outstart of the drama. In a comic role Miss Misener is excellent. Miss Newell has one scene of electric excitement and Marjorie Rhodes and Trevor Ward perform with steady precision. What quality there is in "Power Without Glory" is clearly evident in its interpretation. There is not enough to make it a very rewarding production.

The Sun

JANUARY 14, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Good Acting, Unsatisfactory Thriller.

Michael Clayton Hutton's "Power Without Glory" is a wavering melodrama that shows the effects of calamity, in the form of murder, upon a bewildered, lower-class English family. The new piece, well acted by an imported cast, was put on last night at the Booth.

"Power Without Glory" starts effectively enough, it offers some stirring theater in its second act, but in its third it falls completely apart as the author turns to speechmaking and nobility. And this is regrettable, because there is considerable tension in the middle-of-the-evening material.

Playwright Hutton, in writing about some drab folk of London's East End, depicts the reactions of members of a family when they're caught up in a murder, and reveals the efforts made to shield and save the weakling son who kills a girl at the edge of the Thames.

This son didn't go to war and he steals the girl of the brother who did. But the stay-at-home son also gets himself entangled with a neighborhood hussy and murders her when she tells him that she is pregnant. All members of the family know about Cliff's deed and there is a powerful, second-act scene when the young daughter screams the truth of it into the ears of the harassed father. But in the final act "Power Without Glory" flounders and the author resolves his play all too weakly.

All members of an English cast of seven, brought over by John C. Wilson and the Shuberts, contribute to some first-rate ensemble acting. It's a pity that the play lets them down. Joan Newell is enormously moving in the scene in which she defies the household and piles abuse upon the frustrated, insecure little man who is her father. That's a role admirably played by Trevor Ward.

Peter Murray is excellent as the brazen, spoiled, whimpering son who did Connie in down below the Embankment. Hilary Liddell, playing a role that is not too well written, brings quiet emotional skill to her characterization of the girl who takes her love from one brother and bestows it upon the other. Lewis Stringer is forceful as the returned soldier, if not too believable in his efforts at self-sacrifice, and Marjorie Rhodes is tremendously good as the understanding and patient mother. Helen Misener gabbles amusingly. Chloe Gibson has done a detailed job of direction, but might have given the play more pace in its opening act.

"Power Without Glory" is a vast improvement over some of the melodramas that London has sent to New York; it is fairly resolute for two-thirds of the way. But the author never got around to writing a last act.

The New York Times

JANUARY 14, 1948

Troupe of English Actors Brings 'Power Without Glory' From London to Booth Theatre

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Some excellent British actors have crossed the Atlantic to bring us a mediocre British play. It is Michael Clayton Hutton's "Power Without Glory," put on at the Booth last evening. That title might do double duty as criticism of the production. For the actors, who have come here to repeat their London experience, bring power to a melodrama that lacks glory. Mr. Hutton's craftsmanship is expert; his play is tense and the theme is sensational. But for two well-wrought acts it seems to be leading toward something that is not there.

"Power Without Glory" is the story of a slatternly but human London family that becomes involved in a murder. During the war Eddie's girl, Anna, has come to live with his people until they can be married. But during Eddie's absence Anna has fallen in love with his brother, Cliff. Although Cliff loves her genuinely, he has not been faithful to her. Half in fright, he murders a riverfront strumpet who threatens to come between Anna and him. "Power Without Glory" is preoccupied with the effect the murder has on the different members of an extremely complicated family.

It might be sufficient to describe it as a psychological melodrama, as though that were an end in itself. For all the sensations are there—anger, terror, dread, grief and loyalty. In the parts of the dazed mother and father, Mr. Hutton manages also to write a few human speeches that express the remorse and confusion of two honest persons. But most of the melodrama consists in manipulations of plot and maneuvering of characters. Absorbing as many of the situations may be, "Power Without Glory" has nothing concrete to say.

Out of respect for the quality of the performance, this is a pity. Chloe Gibson, the director, has had the courage to represent the grubbiness and squalor of life in the backroom of a dingy shop by dressing the characters shabbily; and Charles Elson has designed a setting that conveys the meanness of the environment.

* * *

The performance is plain and pithy. The whining accents, the weary tones and the grubby details accurately sketch a definite environment. Seven actors tell the story in a notably homogeneous performance that has pace and architecture. Marjorie Rhodes' haggard mother and Trevor Ward's shuffling father are played with skill and integrity.

There are good performances in every role. As Anna, Hilary Liddell acts with depth of feeling; and as her prospective sister-in-law, Joan Newell gives a fiery performance of a hysterical character. The two brothers—one sniveling and vascillating, the other decisive and forthright—are ably acted by Peter Murray and Lewis Stringer. Helen Misener introduces an amusing character portrait as a crotchety old crone.

The actors deserve a play with a tangible theme. "Power Without Glory" is content with craftsmanship.

Journal and American

JANUARY 14, 1948

A Thrilling Thriller For Your Must List

By ROBERT GARLAND

At last, a play. At long last, a play content to be a play. A play that sets out to solve no problem, point no moral, gild no lily, settle no difference of opinion. A play without an ideology to its name. Or a message on its mind. Except, perhaps, that the play itself is actually the thing, as Hamlet always says.

And that playgoing can be a pleasure and a pastime above pastimes, just as it was last evening at the Booth where John C. Wilson, plus Lee and J. J. Shubert, displayed the imported "Power Without Glory" for the first time in New York. Not since it sent us "Angel Street" has England forwarded a more thrilling thriller.

I'm not sure that Michael Clayton Hutton's "Power Without Glory" isn't the more thrilling of the two. So it seemed last night, at any rate, being somewhat fresher in the mind. But, comparisons being what they are, suffice it to report that there's a new must-see in town to bring you to your seat's edge and hold you.

Its conception is intelligent, its construction adroit, its motivation assured, its drive relentless. On second thought, I think I like it well enough to write a rave review.

• • •

A Murder Story

Even so, I can't tell too much of its story. Ethics, you know, between the producer and the critic. Reveal what you know about a producer, a playwright or a player. But never reveal what you know about the plot of a play built round a murder. Not even if you know as much as you know in "Power Without Glory."

The killing at the Booth takes place off stage and in the first act of the incoming melodrama. The dead girl was a bad girl and her bumping off's a benefit to everyone concerned. Especially to the John Lord household whose living-room's behind their shabby shop in London. Yet murder's murder, so justice demands a victim.

The exposure of this victim and his justified comeuppance occupy the four scenes and three acts—the acts, I think, should be redivided into two—of the Wilson - Shubert importation. And believe me when I insist that the suspense is all but unbearable. These Lords of London are your good friends, in trouble.

Their tears and fears, their alarms and agitations, are yours. And this, in "Power Without Glory" or out of it, is no mean gift of playmaking. Mr. Hutton has it and I'm enthusiastic.

Worthy of Play

To say that the visiting players are worthy of their play is to say what is true and obvious. "Power Without Glory" is superbly cast, brilliantly directed, acted without a mishap. Each of the seven characters is of importance. And each is brought to life with the realization that this is so. Here's good round acting!

By good round actors. Marjorie Rhodes as Maggie Lord, the mother, is not to be forgotten. She has a mother-and-son scene which, in honesty of writing and poignancy of playing, is the equal of anything on Broadway. Hilary Liddell, as her daughter-in-law, is equally worth hymning.

Peter Murray's is a sensitive could-be young killer. Lewis Stringer, as his brother, Eddie, is a disturbing rival for that blood-stained dishonor. Joan Newell reaches emotional heights as Flo, the neurotic sister. Trevor Ward's is a fine befuddled father. And Helen Misener brings comedy whenever comedy's in order. . . .

So "Power Without Glory" is a really thrilling thriller with high intelligence, wide skill and a handsome impact that's still with me as I praise it. "YES" in caps for this one!

PM EXCLUSIVE

JANUARY 15, 1948

Kronenberger

A Passable Thriller With Powerful Acting

Despite an awful lot wrong with it, the new British thriller at the Booth offers a reasonably enjoyable evening. There's no doubt that the third act of *Power Without Glory* does everything it knows how to ruin the good impression made by the previous two. There's again no doubt that *Power Without Glory* is harmed at its own level throughattempting to reach a higher one. And there's no doubt either that what counts most at the Booth is not the play but the players. Without so much good acting, the evening would surely be damned by its bad last act.

• • •

As it is, the evening is badly dampened by it, but hardly damned. Mr. Hutton has his very real merits of craftmanship and style, and there is even a measure of merit in some of his faults. For example, *Power Without Glory* usually knows how to be bad without being boring. And though it gets out of hand by trying to be more than a thriller, it simultaneously gets out of the more familiar melodramatic grooves, and has an air of something different. What Mr. Hutton fails to realize (as some one like Graham Greene never does) is that you make sure you've written a completely sound thriller before you try to write something more than one.

• • •

Actually "thriller" isn't a very good word for *Power Without Glory*, which depends less on being thrilling than on being tense. Its trump card is a sort of foreboding uncertainty; its hold on you less what does happen than what may. In that sense, *Power Without Glory* has a touch, at least, of true terror; and it may fairly be said, I think, that Mr. Hutton couldn't let us down so sharply if he didn't first lure us on so well. For lure us on he does, in this picture of a drably respectable lower-class household faced with the fact that a member of it has just committed a murder. Since even before the murder there was plenty of domestic tension—the young murderer, for example, had won the love of his soldier-brother's girl—the event crystallizes almost as many emotions as it creates. Individuals become hysterical, relationships tangled.

• • •

For two acts, *Power Without Glory* is a pretty tense yarn with pretty plausible people. In the last act, whether because he is baffled by his yarn or merely bored by it, Mr. Hutton half-slops, half-drops it, and gets going on some of the deeper and finer aspects of human relationships, motherhood most of all. I fear he is never so British as in these passages, and never so bad.

Fortunately, though the author has nothing to offer here, the actors have. As the mother of the family, Marjorie Rhodes plays uncommonly well, and in a quieter fashion so does Trevor Ward as the father. Hilary Liddell, as the girl whom both brothers love, handles a difficult part with a good deal of skill. Joan Newell plays the showier role of a sister, and Helen Misener the comedy role of an aunt, with much effect. Peter Murray is less effective as the murderer, and Lewis Stringer as the younger brother; but the cast have the British knack of playing well together, and of making a good enough evening out of none-too-good a play.

—Louis Kronenberger

New York Post

JANUARY 14, 1948

'Power Without Glory' Glum London Play

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

A drab murder among the English lower classes is conscientiously studied in the rather glum drama from London which opened at the Booth Theatre last night. Michael Clayton Hutton's "Power Without Glory" has a tense second act, some good, solid British acting, and quite a bit of effective theatrical tension, but only in that second act did it seem to me satisfying. Although the author is clearly anxious to make his play a serious study of real people caught up in melodramatic circumstances, and the performances assist him handsomely, the result is more filled with stage artifice than with living tragedy.

That "Power Without Glory" is slow in getting started and tends in the first act to lose the spectator's interest from time to time is perhaps not to be held too seriously against it. The playwright's purpose is to build up, by the use of considerable realistic detail, the portrait of the family of John Lord, the humble Thames-side shopkeeper, before contemplating the effect of a murder upon it. Once he has established the family, the action properly grows more brisk, and, after the favorite son has confessed to the killing of a neighborhood girl, there is an entire act in which the drama achieves effectiveness. In the third act, I thought things got out of hand.

The Mother

It is in this act that a determination to justify the play's title results in a new plot complication which struck me as neither believable nor commendable. It is at this time, also, that the mother, who has been an understandable realistic character up to that point, suddenly becomes a sort of symbolic figure of maternal sacrifice in somewhat uncomfortable fashion. In fact, it is my impression that the bottom drops out of Mr. Hutton's work with unfortunate completeness.

Let us pause for a while at the happier second act. Even here the author, despite his interest in character and atmosphere, is more successful at fabricating melodrama than in giving it the heart-breaking reality that it required. But he can write scenes that play well. There is, in particular, a moment, in which the daughter of the family, who had loved the murdered girl, turns on her own mother and father savagely, which has strong emotional impact. There is likewise a second-act curtain which, at least to this reviewer, was not only effective but unexpected.

Certainly the acting should not be blamed for the drama's comparative lack of emotional forcefulness. Indeed, all of it is honest and realistic, particularly in Joan Newell's excellent handling of the scene of family denunciation. It is detracting nothing from Miss Newell's experiness to suggest that one reason for the stirring quality of her outburst may have been the welcome contrast it offered to the innumerable scenes, credible but a little tiring, in which everyone else in the Lord family comforted and petted the son who had committed the murder.

Every portrayal in "Power Without Glory" is so realistic that there is some difficulty in picking any particular actors to praise. In addition to Miss Newell, however, I would commend especially Trevor Ward for his complete impersonation of the father of the family and Hilary Liddell for her playing of a girl loved by the two Lord boys. Mr. Hutton's play knows the value of a good, taut scene, but it doesn't represent the London theatre in one of its distinguished phases.

Daily Mirror

JANUARY 14, 1948

New British Drama Is Gripping

By ROBERT COLEMAN

"Power Without Glory" is one of the few plays of the season to cause a first night audience to linger after the final curtain and bestow upon it robust, appreciative applause. Or, to put it more accurately, to cheer a cast and director.

"Power Without Glory" is a melodrama by Michael Clayton Hutton. A London hit, it is likely to be one of the English productions to find an audience in America. It should bring handsome dividends to John C. Wilson and the Messrs. Shubert, its New York sponsors.

The title seems a little misleading. The opus deals with a humble English family that dreams of accomplishment and hasn't the power to make the dreams come true. Daughter Flo, a movie fan, imagines herself an actress. Brother Eddie, a war veteran, goes for highbrow music and books. Brother Cliff is a temperamental, philandering screwball.

Though Mother Maggie Lord tries to divide her affection between the trio, she cannot help favoring Cliff. She senses that he is the one to worry about. And she's right.

Not satisfied with stealing Eddie's fiancee, Anna, while he's in the Army, Cliff has an affair with a neighborhood tramp. When he learns that she's to become a mother he knocks her down and kills her.

Sister Flo learns the truth and threatens to tell the police on Cliff because she resents the deal he gave Eddie and because the tramp was her pal. Eddie nobly attempts to accept the blame for the crime, but egotistical Cliff won't have it that way. He's too much a prima donna to let another have a big moment in the spotlight.

In the end, the entire family loyally rallies to Cliff and bolsters up his courage when a police inspector calls for him.

It is a drab story of frustrated little people that Hutton has contrived. But it comes vividly to life in the hands of a fine English cast, admirably directed by Chloe Gibson.

There is uniformly excellent acting by Joan Newell, Marjorie Rhodes, Helen Misener, Lewis Stringer, Hilery Liddell, Peter Murray and Trevor Ward, but, as the emphasis of the play is on the distaff side, the Misses Newell and Liddell are given the most tense, dramatic moments and make the most of them.

Miss Newell, as the shallow, bitter, cinema struck Flo, has a histrionic field day in the second act, which brought her a spontaneous ovation.

"Power Without Glory" appeared to grip the attention of a majority of premiereites like a vise. So caught in its spell were they, that few found time to seek flaws in the Hutton script. And it has them. The production seemed to have an especial femme appeal.

If it's melodrama you want, "Power Without Glory," for all its faults and thanks to the quality of its performance, is the best Broadway has to offer.

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 14, 1948

'Power Without Glory' Top-Drawer Drama

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Any playgoer inclined to shop for a full measure of entertainment better add "Power Without Glory" to his list. It is out-and-out melodrama with all the stops pulled.

A theatrical manner of revealing new facts makes the story seem desperately complicated. These tricky twists cannot conceal the square logic of the story nor the deep consistency of the characters.

For some tastes the performances may be overly violent. For others, the vehement expression will simply point up the normal dullness of lives that are crashed emotionally within a couple of hours.

Falls for Weakling.

Behind a modest grocery store lives the Lord family composed of Maggie, her husband, a sister, three children and the girl whom both her sons love.

Flo is a young rebel who wants luxury. Cliff is a selfish weakling, and Eddie is a stronger boy who wants culture the home never offers. Engaged to Eddie, Anna has fallen for the weak charm of Cliff, while her fiance is in the Army.

When a young tart whose defiance Flo idolized, is found murdered, it is soon fairly clear that Cliff is guilty. The play proceeds with impetuous complications to strip these people of any misconceptions they had of each other.

Maggie has always known that Cliff's greed for life would catch up with him. Shattered by his deed, she grows on the tragedy, and finally is the tower of strength who makes the simplest

"Power Without Glory"—*continued*

decisions.

Anna has nobility. Her experience is tragic because much as she must face Cliff's worthless ego, and deeply as she realizes she is hurting Eddie, she cannot shake her love for Cliff.

For all his confusion, Eddie's love parallels hers, and he is able to prove its strength concretely.

Turns on Family.

A streak of Cliff in Flo makes her turn on the whole family in the crisis, but a finer nature defeats her vicious purpose.

All this is enacted at a feverish pitch, which is infectious among the players. Passionate frictions grow until they are almost unbearable, and sometimes promise to leave the actors as spent as the audience.

There is a terrifying and ugly scene in the second act when Flo threatens her family. It is craftily topped by a single curtain line that, once absorbed, promises whole new planes to the story.

Marjorie Rhodes gives the outstanding performance as the mother. The role has more variety than the others, with its blunt comedy, despairing hysterics and final assurance. Miss Rhodes negotiates these phases, never losing the character nor even the tired forward pitch of her walk.

Joan Newell lights up Flo's fireworks with a sustaining power that entirely belies her slight appearance. And Hilary Liddell retains the honorable quality of Anna through sacrificial postures and inflamed reactions.

As Cliff, Peter Murray does a remarkable job of a frequently impassioned role, in combining a weakling pathos with his despicable behaviour. Lewis Stringer restrains the unhappy fineness of Eddie to make him a mature character.

Helen Misener is an enjoyably crotchety aunt, and Trevor Ward reveals a father being quietly destroyed.

There is no dainty implication in this play. It is a deftly linked series of virulent shocks.

"Harvest of Years"

New York Post

JANUARY 13, 1948

'Harvest of Years' Tells Of Big and Little Events

By VERNON RICE

In an interview with this drama reporter, published yesterday in the New York Post, DeWitt Bodeen, author of last night's "Harvest of Years," which opened at the Hudson, said, regarding his play, "I wanted to show such events as love, birth, death taking place in the lives of a group of people, but in the end they weren't the real issues, the occasions that really mattered. The little moments, the so-called little moments, were what they remembered."

Mr. Bodeen did write of love, birth and death in his play on Swedish-American farm life in the San Joaquin Valley in California. He wrote of these incidents in such a way and in such detail that many people will undoubtedly bring out "touching," "moving," and "heart-warming" and put them to use again.

What the playwright failed to do, however, in his emphasis on the important happenings in the lives of his characters, was to let these issues illustrate his theme. The Bromarks, ruled by old Mother Bromark, have a great many things happen to them in the course of the play. One daughter marries the former beau of her sister, the fiancee of Chris Bromark, a son, marries Chris' nephew, two babies are born, the mother of one dying in childbirth—these things happening as the chores of farming, teaching, being a librarian were carried on.

In the end, at the conclusion of a death scene, the mother and a couple of her daughters settle down to chat about "little things," though they are all fairly upset about the "big thing" which had just happened. One of the daughters asks, "Why do we go on talking about the little things?"

Anna Bromark, the mother, replies, "It's the little things that make life worthwhile."

Could be. For some reason, though, one gets the impression that they were all chatting away about unimportant subjects to hide their true feelings about important ones.

Many of the incidents Mr. Bodeen has written carefully, lovingly and well. He knows his people and he wants you to know them, and as he has written for the theatre, he has written scenes in which actors can shine.

Arthur Beckhard, who produced the drama as well as directed it, cast it with people who could handle big scenes when they fell their way. Esther Dale as the mother, Anna Bromark, had strength, resoluteness and just the proper portion of motherly sweetness. Leona Maricle, playing her daughter, Margareta, the jilted school teacher, and Russell Hardie in the role of Chris, her son, had their moments, big and small, which they were able to make seem important.

In the part of Jules Bromark, the nephew, was Philip Abbott, a juvenile new to Broadway. Unquestionably he will not remain new long, unless Hollywood snatches him away.

Mr. Bodeen has written incidents and not a play. He has let the details overshadow his whole. Some of those details are so good, however, that one wishes the whole could have been better.

'HARVEST OF YEARS.'

Play by DeWitt Bodeen; directed by Arthur J. Beckhard; setting by Raymond Sovey; costumes by Peggy Morrison; presented by Arthur J. Beckhard at the Hudson Theater Monday evening, January 12, 1948. The cast:

Astrid Bromark	Virginia Robinson
Bertha Bromark	Philippa Bevans
Jenny Nelson	Lenka Peterson
Chris Bromark	Russell Hardie
Bernhard Jonson	Robert Crawley
Anna Bromark	Esther Dale
Mollie Bromark	Emily Noble
Margareta Bromark	Leona Maricle
Jules Bromark	Philip Abbott

Synopsis: The entire action of the play takes place in the Bromark parlor in a farmhouse in San Joaquin Valley, California. Act I.—Late afternoon on a day in midsummer, 1946. Act II, Scene 1.—A night, the following October. Scene 2—Afternoon of Christmas Day. Act III.—Late afternoon the following September.

New York Herald Tribune

JANUARY 13, 1948

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Swedish Corn

A SINGULARLY unpleasant Swedish-American family has been given a fidgety group dramatic sitting at the Hudson. "Harvest of Years," by Dewitt Bodeen, pretends to point out the "proud, obstinate and kind" traits of Viking descendants, growing grapes in the San Joaquin Valley of California. Since most of the action is concerned with sisters and brothers double-crossing each other, or engaged in candy-pulling and bubble gum chewing, the author has by-passed his major theme with quite a lot of room to spare. Take my word for it, the Bromarks are neither kind nor passably interesting. Even with Esther Dale contributing one of those solid characterizations of a matriarch, "Harvest of Years" comes up with more theatrical chaff than wheat.

* * *

The author has put characters on the stage. Several of them have a dim conviction. What he has failed to do is to involve them in anything approaching dynamic situations. At the start of the first act one is treated to the spectacle of a jilted young woman drinking herself sodden as her witch of a young sister and her ex-fiance go off to the local church to get married. She pulls herself together as miraculously as any alcoholic has ever done in fact or fiction, but she is right back with the Bourbon in the climax. The fact that a sister-in-law has just died in childbirth, after having pulled a fast one on the nicest of the second-generation Bromarks, may be melodramatic, but it is not particularly edifying.

* * *

It would be absurd to expect players to make much sense out of the confused family portrait which Bodeen has drawn. It is to the great credit of the cast that it works valorously, even when the Arthur J. Beckhard staging matches the exposition for ineptitude. Miss Dale shakes her head mournfully until one almost believes that there is some inherent and consequential tragedy in "Harvest of Years." Russell Hardie is excellent as the son who plans to turn over his farm to the brother who has stolen his bride-to-be and Philip Abbott has a moment or two of conviction as the one-armed Viking returning home to still further dislocate the uneven pattern of a household.

The actresses have a tougher time of it in this latest Broadway offering. Leona Maricle makes an effort to demonstrate that regeneration can be achieved through renunciation, but her plight is never moving nor fascinating. Lenka Peterson has the part of the Bromark maid of all work who gives her fiance the brush-off and Emily Noble emotes with considerable hysteria as her sinister counselor in matters of the heart. "Harvest of Years" is a bad play, badly produced and directed. It is too bad that some good performers got tangled up in the proceedings.

The Sun

JANUARY 13, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Tiresome Evening on the Farm.

The summer-theater industry of 1947 yielded the usual crop of new plays, and most of them died quickly, and unprotestingly. One that seemed promising was "Harvest of Years," written by DeWitt Bodeen. Now, in a Broadway showcase, it comes forth as an aimless and tedious drama, a play of high intentions and failing utterly in dramatic impact. The first performance was given last night at the Hudson.

The author presents the trials of a Swedish family, Mother Bromark and her brood, living on a farm in the San Joaquin Valley of California. And he gives, in his three acts, a slow-motion account of their matrimonial complications and their restlessness —their gaiety, humors and ill humors. Some of the characters are moderately well drawn, but they're huddled together in a badly organized play.

One daughter of the Bromark household is jilted by a man who marries her younger sister. An industrious Bromark son, Chris, selects the neighborhood girl he wants for his wife, but she turns him down for his young nephew, Jules, just arrived from France, and the son of Chris's brother, who died abroad. Jules and Jenny marry in due time, but she dies after bearing a child. There's now a baby upstairs to be cared for. And here the author makes his point, in ending his play, that life goes on with the Bromarks.

"Harvest of Years," besides being dreadfully slow-gaited, is heavy-handed in its humor and in its philosophy, and it contains many wearisome scenes. Arthur J. Beckhard, who has given Broadway some worthy service, has directed the piece painstakingly, but in his staging he appears to have intensified the general gloom.

Esther Dale bustles about fairly effectively as the managing and mothering Anna Bromark. There are good enough performances from Lenka Peterson, Philip Abbott, Russell Hardie and Leona Maricle. Raymond Sovey, an experienced hand with farmhouse interiors, has supplied an atmospheric setting.

"Harvest of Years" is very earnest and very dull. It's second-rate "I Remember Mama." Or even third.

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 13, 1948

'Harvest' a Dull Play About Bored People

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

It is a commendable company of actors at the Hudson performing in "Harvest of Years."

This is a family piece, more of a chronicle than a play. Though it has the makings of drama, the construction of the play makes it singularly passive. It concerns a leisurely existence and is played with appropriate calm. The pace slows down sometimes until one feels that he has been in the theater several days.

On the Bromark farm are the mother, four daughters, a son and a young grandson. Mellie steals Bernhard away from her sister Margareta. Bertha is fat and content to take her romance from books. Astrid is a natural spinster.

Jenny, who has long been engaged to Chris Bromark, falls in love with his nephew, Jules, who turns up from France. Chris goes briefly off to sea, and Jenny dies in giving birth to Jules' son.

None Very Happy.

No one of the family is really very happy, but Anna, the mother, calms them with trite philosophy, insisting that it is the little every day things that count.

The chief trouble with all this is that the characters are uninteresting. The hackneyed conversation, as a lady in the audience remarked, seemed often to have been copied off a post office blotter.

Esther Dale plays the patient mother with spirit and a substantial quality. Leona Maricle has a fantastic entrance but carries on to build a character of touching gallantry as Margareta.

Russell Hardie should be commended for making likable the part of Chris, who is unbelievably generous and considerate. As the young French Bromark, who has lost an arm in the war, Philip Abbott acts with quiet intention and peaceful charm.

Occasional Wit.

Phillippa Bevans lets fly with occasionally amusing sarcasm as the fat sister, and Virginia Robinson reveals unusual repose as Astrid.

Emily Noble is a fiery, self indulgent Mellie, whose hysterics give the play punch, and Lenka Peterson is a lovely, disturbed Jenny. Robert Crawley makes a pleasant cad of Bernhard, who is surely more suited to Mellie than Margareta.

The psychology of this play adds up to an odd total. The only person who either has any fun or gets what she wants, is the utterly selfish, unscrupulous Mellie. The rest are dissatisfied and bored, but they never do anything about it except listen to train whistles and remark how nice it would be to go to San Francisco.

Journal American

JANUARY 13, 1948

An Unmotivated Play With Endless Strife

By ROBERT GARLAND

Dewitt Bodeen's "Harvest of Years" is the first soap opera to reach the theatre before it reached the radio. Yesterday, Arthur Beckhard presented it at the Hudson with Esther Dale, who's Mrs. Beckhard, occupying the center of the stage. Under his husbandly direction, she remained there through thick and thin.

Some of "Harvest of Years" is thick. Some is thin. The thick part has to do with the long arm of coincidence which, because the author wills it, smacks down a member of the Bromark family when at his happiest. When playing the accordion, say. Or pulling taffy. Or bubble-gumming. Or elbow-bending with many a merry "Skol!"

The thin part has to do with the non-Bromarkians who, because the author wills it, barge into the Bromark family whenever Astrid, or Bertha, or Chris, or Anna, or Mellie, or Margareta, or Jules, needs someone to love, or hate or to admire sunsets, stars and moons—I'm sure there're two of them—in the West Coast's San Joaquin Valley...

Between the thick part and the thin, there's always Anna Bromark, so brave, so bright, so indestructable.

• • •

Undecided Bromarks

Remembering an earlier theatre-piece which had to do with these grape growers of Southern California, "They Didn't Know What They Wanted" would be an appropriate title for this less worthy one. Frankly, the brace of baffling Bromarks in "Harvest of Years" don't know what they want. Or what they don't want, either. Or——

Consequently, one Bromark is always on the verge of winning another Bromark's loved one away from him. Or well over the verge

"Harvest of Years"—*continued*

and standing with that loved one at the altar. Each female Bromark is sure to be in love, liquor or what used to be known as trouble. Each male Bromark is certain to be dull and undesirably devoted.

Each, that is, but mama. Mama Bromark—who takes time to become a great grandmother before the evening's over—is an optimist to put the radio to shame. Calamity cannot wither nor misfortune stale her boundless, her chronic, her irritating hedonics. Thanks to Dewitt Bodeen, she makes Pollyanna sound like Medea . . .

While there's strife there's soap in "Harvest of Years" on W. 44th st. And there's strife unending!

• • •

Was Carry Nation

The Esther Dale who's Mrs. Beckhard, the Mrs. Beckhard who's Mama Bromark, made her Broadway entrance as Carry Nation in a play in which were Myron McCormick, Mildred Natwick, Joshua Logan, Harry Bellaver, Katherine Emery and Jimmie Stewart. Since then—since 1932—she's appeared in a hundred moving pictures pretending to be plays.

As the obligatory optimist at the Hudson, she still acts as if the lights and cameras of Hollywood were focused on her. It's acting, I daresay, but it's merely two dimensional. On the other hand, Leona Maricle's Margareta manages to achieve a third dimension. And, to a less Helen Morgan-like degree, Lenka Peterson's Jenny.

But the star performer is Russell Hardie as nature's nobleman, Chris Bromark. So, unselfish, so unearthly, so uniquitous a one-generation American as he would be unbearable in less gifted hands than those of Mr. Hardie. He, and a dog that's never allowed to set paw on stage, are my pet participants in this soap opera off the air . . .

The trouble last night with "Harvest of Years" was that you couldn't dial it away in favor of "The Kiss of Death" on WCBS.

Daily Mirror

JANUARY 13, 1948

'Harvest of Years' Slim Pickings

By ROBERT COLEMAN

"Harvest of Years," newest tenant of the Hudson Theatre, introduces to Broadway a playwright of promise in Dewitt Bodeen. It contains so much that is good as to make it regrettable for a reviewer to decide that it hasn't enough for success.

Author Bodeen has attempted to combine the best features of "Beyond the Horizon" and "I Remember Mama." What he has succeeded in doing, however, is to write a sketchy script that only grips the interest intermittently.

He is interested in a colony of California Swedes with a penchant for strong drink and inconstant affection. One of the Bromark girls steals her sister's fiance, and the grandson of the family arrives at the farm just in time to win away his uncle's fiance.

The jilted sister drowns her bitterness in bourbon and school teaching. The jilted uncle runs away to sea, but discovers that the Viking strain in him isn't so robust as he supposed. He's become a domesticated farm type.

Two other sisters reconcile themselves to spinsterhood, one because she's on the stout side, the other because she really hasn't the desire to realize her dream of becoming a fashionable Park Avenue dress designer. There have been a lot of hefty gals who found romance, and dressmakers less talented than Bodeen visions have done all right in the big town.

Bodeen's dialogue is on the shallow side. He hints at deep currents, but seems afraid of getting caught in them. Some of the wordage, in fact, is so trite as to be embarrassing. The result is that you never care so much about Bodeen's characters and their problems as you should.

When spurned sister Bromark went on a toot in the first act, a kindly, elderly gentleman seated near us averred to his companion that he just didn't believe she was pickled. Neither did we. But we were more than a little embarrassed at her efforts to simulate the state.

Producer Arthur Beckhard has assembled a cast of capable players for "Harvest of Years." It includes Esther Dale, Russell Hardie, Philip Abbott, Leona Maricle, Virginia Robinson, Philippa Bevans, Lenka Peterson, Robert Crawley and Emily Noble.

They get as much from their roles, and in some cases more, than Bodeen wrote into them.

Beckhard has directed the play at a leisurely pace. The players are often caught in static poses, as if their lines and business had run too thin and left them stranded.

Raymond Sovey has done about all he could with the scenery on what appears to have been a limited budget.

"Harvest of Years" looms as a flop crop. It is a commodity not likely to lure the attention of speculators.

PM EXCLUSIVE

JANUARY 14, 1948

Kronenberger

Lots of Family Life But Not Much Else

The sort of title Mr. Bodeen chose is no bad indication of the sort of play he wrote. Can a title like *Harvest of Years*, with its tired metaphor and flat vague sound, be said to evoke much? Far from there being magic in it, there is precious little meaning. We have encountered the same kind of title over and over, year after year; and we have also, as it turns out, encountered the same kind of play.

Or what's more important, the same quality of play. For it's not of the subject-matter of *Harvest of Years* that any one would complain: there must be plays about family life as long as there are families, and plays about farm life as long as there are farms. Both are eternal subjects, and it's not their fault, but the playwrights', that they are eternally abused. Furthermore, they are subjects that show up second-rateness very glaringly: one of the dangers, indeed, of working in the great open spaces is that they may offer you scarcely a bush to hide your mistakes behind.

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Mr. Bodeen has certainly not hidden his, even behind a big mound of family drama. Plenty goes on among the Bromarks. Greta Bromark's fiancé jilts her for her sister Nellie. Chris Bromark's fiancé jilts him for his nephew, Jules. Cheated of the altar, Greta takes refuge in the bottle, and stages scenes. Twice babies are born, and once the mother dies in childbirth. But somehow, Mr. Bodeen suggests, life goes on and families hang together. Indeed, after firing off all his emotional heavy artillery, Mr. Bodeen lets old Mama Bromark conclude that in family life it's the small day-by-day things that matter.

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One has no more quarrel with Mr. Bodeen's sentiments than with his subject-matter. But then one seldom has any quarrel with the sentiments or the subject-matter of doggerel; one merely knows that something else, something more, is required for poetry. And so here, in the presence of many plain truths about family life, what one really notices is the absence of any real sensibility and perception; what one deplores is Mr. Bodeen's commonplace use of words and fumbling workmanship. Life goes on, says the play; but the play itself does more than that, it goes on and on and on. In a piece of this type one should at times be moved and is all too often bored. There are a few scenes that smell of drama, a few speeches that smack of talent, and almost nothing more.

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Esther Dale heads a cast that includes Leona Maricle, Russell Hardie, Philip Abbott, Phillippa Bevans and Lenka Peterson. The acting is agreeable enough, considering that neither the play nor the direction favors the actors.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

The New York Times

JANUARY 13, 1948

Esther Dale Appears in 'Harvest of Years,' by DeWitt Bodeen, at the Hudson Theatre

By BROOKS ATKINSON

No one should assume that Dewitt Bodeen has committed a crime by writing "Harvest of Years," which was put on slowly at the Hudson last evening. He has put together a wholesome and philosophical homily about a Swedish farm family in California. Although the sons and daughters invariably make the wrong decisions about marriage, the family quietly goes along, sustained by the little commonplaces of every day.

As things are at the moment, this ought to console and uplift. No piker as a playwright, Mr. Bodeen has provided it with all the standard equipment of popular success. It alternates a laugh with a tear—just like life in this respect. And in the course of the evening it offers two wedding dresses, a Christmas tree and jolly family celebration, two pregnancies, one death, a young man with one arm though a heart of gold and a broken-hearted school teacher who is heroically hitting the bottle.

* * *

To your correspondent, who ought to be ashamed of himself, "Harvest of Years" is spurious and maudlin, manufactured automatically out of staples of the theatre. But Mr. Bodeen probably regards it as an endorsement of the good qualities of human nature, like "Abie's Irish Rose."

And Arthur J. Beckhard, who has not produced anything on Broadway for a number of years, is no doubt returning with something he regards as superior to the tawdriness of Broadway. As his own director, he has staged it with the solemnity of a kind-hearted morality play. Esther Dale, as the Swedish matriarch, acts a character part in meticulous detail, exuding homely nobility.

* * *

Leona Maricle acts the heartsick dipsomaniac more palatably than Mr. Bodeen has written the part. As a magnanimous young farmer, Russell Hardie is virtually painless. Lenka Peterson, who is notably good-looking, plays a lovesick maiden pleasantly enough. Emily Noble has one good scene as a love thief and plays its acceptably. As a footloose Swede from Europe, Philip Abbott has an embarrassingly enigmatic part to play and does it as creditably as possible.

Mr. Beckhard has directed it with all the frenzy of a funeral march. The heaviness of his touch and the torpidity of the pace of the performance accent the speciousness of the script and handicap the actors a good deal. Even Raymond Sovey, an able scene-designer, seems to have fallen under the literal spell of the occasion, and has hammered together a completely unimaginative setting.

It is no crime to write a dull play with a noble message. But it would be a crime to assume that there is any truth in this ponderous endorsement of stupidity.

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 13, 1948

'Harvest of Years' a Diffuse Play

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Like "I Remember Mama," DeWitt Bodeen's "Harvest of Years" is a character study of Northern California Scandinavians. But, unlike "Mama," which held together and made a touching play, the drama which was offered at the Hudson last evening by Arthur J. Beckhard is diffuse to the point of pointlessness.

Mr. Beckhard, who directed his own production, must have believed that in the script of "Harvest of Years" he had a vineyard version of "The Cherry Orchard." Things happen—some big things and mostly little ones—but life goes on just the same, or yoost the same, as they'd say in the play.

Mr. Bodeen's setting is the Bromark farm house in the San Joaquin valley, which is presided over by the stalwart and philosophical Swedish grandmother, Anna Bromark. It takes at least an act to get all of Anna's tribe straightened out in the mind—Chris, Mellie, Margareta, Astrid, Bertha and Jules Bromark—and then to figure out what Jenny Nelson and Bernhard Jonson are going to do to fit themselves in.

Carefully Presented.

It takes two more acts for the author to figure out what he is going to do, once he has all these people together, and by this time the play is over. In the mean time life has gone on—girls falling in love with the wrong boys and boys falling in love with the wrong girls. I wouldn't attempt to sort it all out for you because it would take four columns and you'd never read that far.

As with any of Mr. Beckhard's infrequent stage offerings, "Harvest of Years" is carefully done and nicely cast. Mrs. Beckhard—Esther Dale—plays Mama Bromark competently and with an excellent Swedish accent. Leona Maricle has some well-played moments as a daughter who carries the torch in one hand and a bottle of bourbon in the other. Lenka Peterson, Emily Noble, Philip Abbott and Russell Hardie are among those who help contribute character and atmosphere.

But character and atmosphere alone do not make a play—and Mr. Bodeen hasn't quite managed this little trick, either. I still remember Mama.

"Iolanthe"

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DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 13, 1948

Two Subs Sing Bright 'Iolanthe'

By ROBERT SYLVESTER

Not even a D'Oyly Carte singer is rugged enough to stand off New York weather, so last night the Gilbert and Sullivan "Iolanthe" had substitutes in important roles at the Century. The Savoyards took the whole thing in stride and made the G.&S. jabs at Parliament one of their most successful productions of the season.

With Darrel Fancourt down with the grippe, Richard Dunn stepped in to sing the role of the Earl of Mountararat and proved himself a more than capable light comic with a strong, clear voice. Leonard Osborn subbed for Thomas Round as Earl Tolloller and did equally well.

Denise in Debut.

Denise Findlay, making her first local appearance, returned to the company after an illness and sang the title role with warmth and charm. And there was always, of course, Martyn Green to keep things going with a wave or two of his Lord Chancellor's pince nez.

The timeless quality of Gilbert and Sullivan is particularly apparent in "Iolanthe." Indeed, in some sequences it might easily be a British political satire of today. Its wandering central theme of fairies and peers is ridiculous but somehow appropriate to the present era of mysterious political machinations.

Charles Dorning was a handsome and tuneful Strephon, Ella Hallman a compelling and dominant fairy queen, and Margaret Mitchell as lovely a Phyllis as there has been in "Iolanthe" history.

"Iolanthe" appeared to have been somewhat refurbished, too. Most of the costumes looked bright and new. All of them looked costly.

'IOLANTHE.'

Opera by W. S. Gilbert; composed by Arthur Sullivan; costumes by Norman Wilkinson; orchestra under the direction of Isidore Godfrey; presented by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London at the Century Theater Monday evening, January 12, 1948. The cast:

The Lord Chancellor	Martyn Green
Earl of Mountararat	Richard Dunn
Earl Tolloller	Leonard Osborn
Private Willis	Richard Walker
Strephon	Charles Dorning
Queen of the Fairies	Ella Hallman
Iolanthe	Denise Findlay
Celia	Gwyneth Cullimore
Leila	Joan Gillingham
Fleta	Patricia Radfield
Phyllis	Margaret Mitchell

The Sun

JANUARY 13, 1948

'IOLANTHE'

London's D'Oyly Carte Opera Company turned to "Iolanthe" last evening as the third presentation of their season of Gilbert and Sullivan at the Century Theater, and those loyal Savoyards who make the trek to Seventh avenue and 59th street during the remainder of this week will find the British peerage is being ribbed as amusingly and melodiously as ever.

There were a couple of last-minute switches in the cast last night. Richard Dunn, who was not even listed among the noted organization's featured players, took over the role of the Earl of Mountararat for the ailing Darrell Fancourt, and Leonard Osborn replaced Thomas Round as Earl Tolloller. As a result there were a few spots here and there where the performance was a trifle stiffer than good Gilbert and Sullivan should be, but there was nothing wrong with the overall achievement.

Although the score of "Iolanthe" is not as universally familiar as the music of "Pinafore" or "The Mikado" it is full of music to delight the ear, especially when it is as well sung as it was last evening, both by the principals and the excellent chorus. The D'Oyly Carte peers not only march with sly pomp, but they can sing, too.

The role of Phyllis the Arcadian shepherdess, falls this time to Margaret Mitchell and she brings a fresh, true voice to the part. Her singing, both in her solos and her duets, was a joy to listen to. Charles Dorning was a trifle too stilted in his playing of Strephon, her beloved, but all was forgotten when he took up the musical part of his role.

Mr. Dunn won a well deserved round of applause after he had tunefully expounded the virtues of the Lords in the final act, and Denise Findlay, making her first appearance of the season here, furnished one of the evening's vocal high spots in Iolanthe's plea for her son. Ella Halman was duly regal, and in fine voice, as the Queen of the Fairies, and Richard Walker was a Grenadier Guard worthy of her affection.

The performer who really stole the show, however, was the veteran Martyn Green. Whether he was recounting his nightmare in the famous "patter" song, warbling of his high degree of susceptibility to feminine charms, or arguing a fine legal point with himself, his Lord Chancellor was hilariously perfect.

The confirmed Savoyards were obviously having a fine time at Century last evening. Although this reviewer has yet to attain that high estate, he enjoyed the proceedings, too.

HERRICK BROWN.

New York Post

JANUARY 13, 1948

'Iolanthe' Still a Joy As Savoyards Do It

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

Of all the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, I think that the most enchanting is "Iolanthe." In some part my delight in it may be due to memories of the superb production, a thing of historic beauty and imagination, which Winthrop Ames gave it virtually a quarter of a century ago. But even in a less soaring performance it is every inch a masterpiece. It may not have the scope and magnitude of the more Olympian classics of the theatre, such as a "Hamlet" or an "Oedipus," but, within its modest minor limits, I believe it comes remarkably close to being a perfect work of art.

Last night the D'Oyly Carte Company got around to its production of this finest result of the uneasy collaboration of the two Victorian masters, and it proved again to be the joy it is whenever it is soundly presented. Frankly it is not one of the visiting Savoyards' most distinguished performances. The lyrics are not always audible in a work in which not a word should be missed. The orchestra occasionally seems to lack body where every number deserves the tribute of lovely playing. The acting, save in Martyn Green's joyous portrayal of the Lord Chancellor, lacks brilliance.

A Great Virtue

Yet, whatever their weaknesses in various minor ways, the visitors have the immense virtue of knowing, loving and respecting the opera they are presenting, of capturing its spirit and of making recognizable its quality. The famous Winthrop Ames production was so magnificent in itself that it might conceivably have made a lesser work seem brilliant. By being merely workmanlike in it, the D'Oyly Carte group leaves no doubt that "Iolanthe" is as wonderful as those of us who love it have always insisted that it is.

Not wanting to be bigoted on the subject, I will grant for the sake of argument that Sullivan may have composed richer scores. With greater reluctance I will even try to admit that Gilbert may have written another libretto that was similarly brightened by wit, imagination and a kind of mocking beauty. But what I am sure of is that in none of the other Savoy wonderworks has the genius of both men reached an equally high point at the same time. There is no argument as to whether Gilbert or Sullivan did the better job, for here words and music are equally delightful.

A Triumph

The entire conception of "Iolanthe," with its struggle between those incomparable Gilbertian peers and the vengeful fairies, and the romance of Strephon, who was a mortal only up to his waist, is an imaginative triumph, and the satire, the humor, the comic inventiveness and the general enchantment of the story are sheer delight, to use that inevitable word again. The songs, whether grave or gay, are invariably lovely. Here the Savoy world of satire, loveliness and whimsical fantasy is at its most happily characteristic.

As I have at least suggested, Mr. Green is in his finest form as the highly susceptible Chancellor, playing, singing and dancing with incomparable style. Of the others, I would single out Margaret Mitchell as Phyllis, Denise Findlay as Iolanthe, Gwyneth Cullimore as Celia, and Richard Walker as Private Willis, although I haven't a hard word to say of any of them. The theatre has few things to offer as comforting to the spirit as "Iolanthe."

New York Herald Tribune

JANUARY 13, 1948

By VIRGIL THOMSON

Best in Its Kind

IF THE D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, now playing at the New Century Theater, presents the operettas of W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan at their best, so does "Iolanthe," which was given by this company last night, give us both authors at their surest and most inventive. The subject, which is a satirical view of the House of Lords, may have less universal appeal than life in the navy or ministerial government as viewed from the comic angle of a Japanese royal household; but the work itself is well nigh perfect from every angle and in every number. And the D'Oyly Carte presentation of it, if not perfect in every rôle, is impeccable for style and as charming a conception of His Majesty's loyal subjects as has come out of Britain in any art form during this reporter's lifetime.

• • •

The secret of operetta is multiplicity of satire. Not only must the subject be treated with humor, but the poetry must make fun of all poetry and the music of all music. The more styles and forms you can debunk the richer the whole work becomes. In "Iolanthe" Gilbert has kidded the history of English poetry from Dryden to Tennyson, and Sullivan has taken off English music from Purcell to the Victorian anthem, including the royal march and the circus waltz, the pastorale, the foreign-style love duet and the manly ballad. All these are framed by finales and set-pieces of the utmost vivacity and set off by patter songs and choruses that leave one breathless with laughter and admiration. Martyn Green, as the Lord High Chancellor, gave last night the evening's most breath-taking execution in the famous Insomnia Song. When any actor's diction permits him the utmost in speed along with the utmost in clarity, he has at his disposal a technique of virtuosity that renders mere singing unnecessary.

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Not the least of the deficits of this company's performances is their possession (a monopoly, I believe) of Sullivan's original orchestra scores. Other troupes are obliged to fake the orchestration. The D'Oyly Carte group gives you the music, instrumental as well as vocal, in its true version. And Sullivan had a lovely hand with the orchestra, light, expressive and infinitely varied. If the present performances are a bit lop-sided tonally, the disequilibrium is due to economy in the string section (only nine strings all told were used last night to six brasses and six woodwinds) and to consequent overplaying of the trumpets in tutti passages. Otherwise the orchestral performance was, for a first night, not at all unpleasant. If it was not exactly symphonic, neither was it at any time coarse or unmusical.

• • •

Nothing in the show was unmusical. It was spoken and sung trippingly upon the tongue. Its lightness all round was a refreshment for Americans, oppressed as we are in our musical theaters by heavy sounds and sexual insistences. Really there is nothing more delightful for young and old than Gilbert and Sullivan, the best Gilbert and Sullivan, performed by the D'Oyle Cartes, unquestionably the ideal performers of Gilbert and Sullivan in our time.

"Pirates of Penzance"--"Trial by Jury"

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PM EXCLUSIVE

JANUARY 7, 1948

Kronenberger

An Unusually Gay Night With the D'Oyly Carters

From a very nice *Mikado* the D'Oyly Carters have gone on to a remarkably fine *Pirates*. Their second bill, which includes *Trial by Jury*, is proof of their first-rateness. All is animated; yet all is disciplined. As a very backward but nonetheless very British major - general, Martyn Green knows that those Ko-Koesque caperings of his would be in frightfully bad form; hence he is the very pattern, &c. &c. The orchestra, too, seems the better for the Cornish sea air. And the voices and choruses are delightful, so that Monday night was a triumph of singing and hence a triumph for Sullivan. Which was fine with me, who am very much of a Sullivan man.

• • •

But *The Pirates*, of course, is very much of a Sullivan opera. It is not completely first-chop Gilbert. But the score is another matter, for *The Pirates* represents one of Sullivan's greatest achievements in operatic take-off, in high-styled travesty; and when that score receives its due, *The Pirates* becomes one of most exuberant and enchanting of all the Savoy operas. Furthermore, only Sullivan—never Gilbert—can provide that enchantment, can get charm and loveliness into his mischief. That is what the Elizabethan wits could do with words, what Pope still could do in *The Rape of the Lock*, where the great parody of Homer is almost as good poetry as Homer. What brought down the house Monday night was Martyn Green's justly admired recitation of Gilbert's justly admired patter song. But surely a little earlier there had been something a good deal finer, the whole great mock-operatic sequence that begins with the arrival of the general's daughters and culminates in *Poor, wandering one*, an aria that one has difficulty in thinking of as partly a take-off. Helen Roberts sang it delightfully, and the chorus of girls was fine throughout the entire scene.

The whole cast performed well. Mr. Green deserves a final mention; and as Frederic, Thomas Round cements the very good impression he first made as Nanki-Poo. Darrell Fancourt is an imposing Pirate King, Richard Walker a sympathetic police sergeant, and Ella Halman a highly satisfactory Ruth.

• • •

Trial by Jury survives as a gifted prentice piece, and holds up as an engaging curtain-raiser. Its broad humor is sustained by its rollicking pace, and by the fact that all of it is sung. Every argument that is brought against serious opera—that it's unreal, that it's florid, that it's absurd—becomes, by the same token, an asset of comic opera. A lot here that if spoken would only fall flat, when sung seems rather funny.

Trial by Jury is also well sung, particularly by Gwyneth Cullimore (plaintiff) and Leonard Osborn (defendant).

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

'PIRATES OF PENZANCE.'

Opera composed by Arthur Sullivan; written by W. S. Gilbert; presented by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London at the Century Theater. The cast:

Major-Gen. Stanley	Martyn Green
The Pirate King	Darrell Fancourt
Samuel	Richard Dunn
Frederic	Thomas Round
Sergeant of Police	Richard Walker
Mabel	Helen Roberts
Edith	Joyce Wright
Kate	Joan Gillingham
Isabel	Enid Walsh
Ruth	Ella Halman

'TRIAL BY JURY.'

Opera written by W. S. Gilbert; composed by Arthur Sullivan; staged by Anna Bethell; costumes by George Sheringham; orchestra under the direction of Isidore Godfrey; presented by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London at the Century Theater Monday evening, January 5, 1948. The cast:

The Learned Judge	Richard Watson
Counsel for the Plaintiff	Chas. Dorning
The Defendant	Leonard Osborn
Foreman of the Jury	Ridley Flynn
Usher	Richard Walker
Associate	C. William Morgan
The Plaintiff	Gwyneth Cullimore
First Bridesmaid	Enid Walsh

Journal American

JANUARY 6, 1948

The D'Oyly Carters Are Arty, Pretentious

By ROBERT GARLAND

Frankly, there was an awful lot of Gilbert and Sullivan going on and on and on last night at the Century Theatre.

Beginning ahead of time with the "Trial by Jury" chorus singing "Hark the hour of ten is sounding" (actually, it wasn't even half-past eight by the clock on Columbus Circle), a long-drawn operatic evening came finally to an end with "The Pirates of Penzance" chorus singing "Poor wandering ones, if such——"

Well, this poor wandering one was glad to wander home where Rodgers and Hart were transcribed on the radio.

No true Savoyard, it's possible for me to get too much Gilbert and Sullivan between eight-twenty-seven and eleven-eighteen on a New York winter evening. The one act of "Trial by Jury" plus the two acts of "The Pirates of Penzance" is too much Gilbert and Sullivan for this non-true Savoyard to relish at a sitting.

Especially when performed as reverently as the D'Oyly Carters perform them up near Central Park. (And for "reverently" you can substitute "preciously" if you want to.)

• • •

Makes Allowances

A week ago, when "The Mikado" was the ritual of the evening, all sorts of allowances were made for the aforesaid "reverence."

Maybe the visitors from London were weary after their trans-Atlantic passage. Maybe they were undernourished owing to the scarcity of proper food in England. Maybe they were downcast by the wintry welcome bestowed upon them by Manhattan. Whatever they were, they were certainly not the pre-war Savoyards we Americans had hoped for.

But, realizing that England expects every American to do his duty by Gilbert and Sullivan, we were good and gracious.

Now, however, with a week of rest, restaurants and clearing weather, the visitors from London are still not the Savoyards we Americans had hoped for. Last night, in the unbecoming Century, "Trial by Jury" was better said-and-sung than "The Pirates of Penzance." But nei-

"Pirates of Penzance"--"Trial by Jury"—*continued*

ther was worthy of the D'Oyly Carte tradition.

It's a matter of spirit, I think, rather than of visual presentation. The old bounce just isn't there. In its place, is an arty you-should-like-this-or-else pretentiousness.

* * *

Excellence Missing

The old cast excellence is also missing. Martyn Green, the D'Oyly Carters hung-over funnyman, is funny enough in his easy-going imitative way.

But he doesn't appear in the opening "Trial by Jury" and he has nothing laughable to do in the closing "Pirates of Penzance." In the former, Richard Watson is his superior as The Learned Judge; in the latter Richard Walker is his superior as The Sergeant of Police. Even his major-general song is more pitter-like than patter.

As The Major-General's Mabel, Helen Roberts misuses a shrill unpleasant voice. Ella Halman's Ruth is better singing.

Reverence, tradition, or just plain listlessness, has got the visiting Savoyards down. Or perhaps the visiting Savoyards aren't up to the Gilbert and Sullivan demands. Be these conjectures as they may, the double bill occupying the attention of the D'Oyly Carters is, along with the bill that went before, a distressful disappointment...

It couldn't be (could it?) that the new Atomic Age and the old Savoy Tradition aren't complementary? Something's missing somewhere at the Century.

The New York Times

JANUARY 6, 1948

D'Oyly Carte's Twin Program of 'Pirates of Penzance' and 'The Trial by Jury'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Any quivers of excitement running through the town this morning can probably be traced to the fact that the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company is in fine fettle. After opening the season with an undistinguished "Mikado" last week, it sang "The Pirates of Penzance" and "Trial by Jury" brilliantly at the New Century last evening. Like all other Savoy operas, these are two of the best and deserve the most immaculate acting and singing.

All educated men everywhere know that they can depend upon Darrell Fancourt and Martyn Green to play Gilbert and Sullivan in the true satirical style, though perhaps Mr. Fancourt and Mr. Green are adding a new dimension to perfection in "The Pirates." As the pirate king Mr. Fancourt is superb, rolling out his swagger songs with comical majesty. And even apart from the patter song, which is sung capitally, Mr. Green's modern major-general is keen, dapper and dry, and enormously funny.

* * *

But the other parts are also done with distinction. As the exquisite, bridling Mabel, Helen Roberts sings with rapture that is nicely tinged with irony, and in a voice of great purity, range and volume. Thomas Round's Frederic is also beautifully sung, and it is acted with overcivilized dexterity, the humor lightly stated. As the pusillanimous police sergeant, Richard Walker gives a richly comic performance. Ella Halman's Ruth is mettlesome enough to command respect for a part that Gilbert growled at.

In "Trial by Jury," which opens the program, you can also enjoy Mr. Walker's Pickwickian performance of the officious usher in quite another vein. Richard Watson's roguish judge who is not above musical slapstick is an unfailing source of innocent merriment in the second piece Gilbert and Sullivan ever wrote. Something appreciative must be said for Gwyneth Cullimore's bold, dissembling plaintiff.

* * *

Perhaps these operas are easier to play than "The Mikado." "Trial By Jury," which was known as a cantata in its day, is in one rushing pattern of broad fooling. And "The Pirates" is tightly organized. More vividly than the other operas, it illustrates Gilbert's stylized satire of Victorian manners—the fierce pirates with soft hearts and a fine sense of gentlemanly honor, the sweet, vacuous yet antic maidens, the terrified policemen with their devotion to duty and Frederic with his impeccable deportment in trying circumstances.

Excepting the lovely duet between Mabel and Frederic in the second act, and the astonishingly lyrical hymn to poetry, you do not have to take anything in "The Pirates" seriously. It represents the sublime luxury of beauty with a witty mind. And the D'Oyly Carte Company at their best are masters of the droll style and the well-bred manner. Both "Trial by Jury" and "The Pirates" are freshly dressed in gay and enchanting costumes, and they are played with sparkle and relish.

If Isidore Godfrey can ever teach the orchestra to play Sullivan that perfectly, the delights of the current Savoy invasion will be complete. Sometimes last evening the singers seemed to be dragging the orchestra patiently behind them.

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 6, 1948

D'Oyly Carte Presents G and S Double Bill

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

It is a double bill that the D'Oyly Carte troupe is presenting as its second presentation of Gilbert and Sullivan, "The Pirates of Penzance," with "Trial by Jury" as a curtain raiser.

The shorter work is certainly not one of the team's best, as there are no notable tunes and the lyrics add up to nothing more than the frothiest idea. The company makes no great effort to project each word across from the stage, but relies on pantomimic comedy for most of its effects.

Richard Watson, as the Judge in a breach of promise suit, contributes most of the amusement with broad smirks at the bridesmaids and the notes he sends to them and the Plaintiff. Richard Walker livens the one-acter as a bumbling usher, and Leonard Osborn and Gwyneth Cullimore sing nicely as the parties to the case.

Delightfully Nonsensical.

"The Pirates" has its own individuality in the Gilbert and Sullivan library. The former devised one of his most delightfully nonsensical plots in this tale of gentlemen's duty.

You may remember that it explores the devious mixup of one Frederic, apprenticed to pirates till his 21st birthday, who suddenly finds he was born on Feb. 29th of Leap Year.

The charm of the piece lies in the devastatingly literal applications of ethics, as the young man is freed, then returns to the outlaws. The same fine line of morale dictates the behavior of the police force and the pirates.

Only the aristocratic Major General tells a lie, and it causes everybody extra trouble.

Music Often Florid.

Sullivan's score for "The Pirates" has a few typically memorable tunes, but the music is often operatic, even florid. The duet "Stay, Frederic, Stay" and several other numbers are first rate concert fare.

More in the familiar G. and S. style are the lovely "Poor Wand'ring One," "The Policeman's Lot" and the patter song about, "The Model Major General," which Martyn Green trips off with brilliant facility.

The work is presented beautifully with colorful appropriate costumes, and the company is utterly at home in the artificial ramifications of the tale.

Darrell Fancourt is a magnificent pirate King, playing with grand gestures and a rolling walk that suggests years on the high seas.

Fancy Cadenzas.

Helen Roberts has just the right vocal approach for the heroine Mabel. The role demands that fancy cadenzas be tossed off with arch ease, and has high notes that call for real volume. She negotiates all this without losing a syllable of the lyrics.

Thomas Round repeats the hero role he performed in "The Mikado" last week with the same stalwart nobility, and Ella Halman similarly shows herself again a mistress of the vocal villainess in the Savoyard library.

Richard Walker appears a second time in the evening, as the Sergeant of Police so terrified of the pirates, and performs with rich broad humor.

One of the most charming numbers in the opera, visually and musically, is the one in which the girls decide to talk about the weather so their sister Mabel can be daintily forward with her new beau Frederic.